

FORTUNATO DEPERO

SO I THINK SO I PAINT

ideologies of an italian self-made painter



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**SO I THINK
SO I PAINT**

ideologies of an italian self-made painter

Translated by Raffaella Lotteri

Depero

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*My good-bye greeting to Mattioli of Milan
and Bosso of Turin, and my arrival greeting
to John B. Salterini of New-York*

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foreword

While I dedicate this new book of mine with the tenderness the heart of a man and of an artist can feel, as a mark of brotherly gratitude, for two old friends (one of Milan and the other of New-York) who are as the pillars of the bridge of my second American undertaking, I cannot help thinking that a writer or an artist should, from time to time, dedicate some of his works to those people and hostile forces which have constantly humiliated, grieved and exasperated him during his life, who have gently and with delicate cunning tried to make him stumble in every circumstance and to misunderstand and misrepresent his expressions and work. I feel particularly grateful to these people, for it has been proved that it is hard, heavy, difficult and disagreeable air which sharpens body and brain and tempers the strength of him who wants to reach his aim. It has been proved that a street full of stones and interrupted by sudden ditches awakens the tension of the eye and of the foot. An obstacle makes the horse jump and renders it elastic and flying. To one who refuses a justified favour, to one who opposes a justified plan, to one who derides a hard toil, one should only answer with thanks before going one's way in order to ask again, to plan again, to toil again with happy patience and renewed zeal. A contrary, hostile, force excites and spurs onward. A woman repulsing you makes you want to insist. Undoubtedly, contrasts are interesting, strengthening, and exciting. Just as when everything around you is silent and still, you can better listen and measure with greater clearness what is right and wrong in your manner of thinking and of living.

Therefore I owe a special and eternal gratitude to the more or less thorny bushes crossing (no, I correct myself), following my path. Gratitude to closed doors, transmitting to the wrist the will to open them. Gratitude to the endless stairs, ungenerous and deceitful, but always giving the feeling of rising and rising towards Heaven and of falling and falling down to Hell. A smooth road is a boring and monotonous Purgatory. A mountaineer would say that stairs are like mountain paths, uncertain and steep, but rendering muscles elastic and the summit more desirable.

This book may have several faults: it may contain naive stories, (the artist is always telling small stories of small, reached, or vanished dreams), it may be a summary of ideas which some will find already trite. But then I, who am hopelessly candid, will ask: why trite? Who expressed them? How? When? Perhaps, or rather, certainly, some have had and experimented these ideas. What of it? Can I not continue my way as I please? Must we always begin anew? You may say: this book (if you consider it a book) or, this dictionary (if you consider it a dictionary) is too personal. But this is its character. It is a review of voices, of ideas, of confessions, of observations, of explanations, of intimate and public dialogues, a kind of diary of one's lived daily dream. I thought it might be interesting and instructive to know how an artist writes, lives, thinks and paints: an artist who, during his whole life, has painted, lived and suffered in his own way, listening to everybody and imitating none. Examine him in his mistakes, in his fixed ideas and apparent incongruities, in his unreal dreams and wonderful plastic utility and inutility. These things and facts, these dreams and unrealities, this utility and inutility of shadows and of splendours might cause people to ponder and, one day, they might change light, shadow or meaning. A splendour of yesterday is, today, a ruin in the shade. A ruin or a shadow of to-day might become a light of to-morrow: it is the strange game of time.

A publisher might say that this book does not interest him; another might say that it is the work of a real writer, lucid and full of living, palpitating images, but that it contains problems that Ita-

lian artists have already solved. Well, then let us publish it in English, since the publisher said that in America it would be successful. Also, it could become a good and useful introduction ticket. I hope it will be! Because, in every occasion and to each one it tells briefly and in a various unexpected manner all that I sincerely believe and, at the same time, it illustrates the world I have drawn, dreamt and painted.

And may young people, who wish to rise from the apocalyptic material and moral chaos, who long for a renewed spiritual freedom, who aspire to a modern universal upright conscience, find in this book useful and profitable advice directing them towards their own future with strength, substance, character and style; may they consider their own problem as the aim and decisive result of their own life and, again, may this book be a comfort to one's anonymous and immense lived sacrifice.

We must not forget that the toil of the talented investigators of these last fifty years is full of precious meaning. Seek out and study in their works the seed of your future and cultivate it lovingly. I also heartily dedicate this work of mine to American youth that, fortunately, has not before its eyes and within its mind the warning and encumbrant phantom of tradition and convention. Undoubtedly, this phantom contains inestimable beauties and educational suggestive values; it contains deep and profitable teaching. But, alas, it is always a phantom slowing down and forbidding the process of seeing, understanding and acting with freedom of mind and of taste.

Tradition could also be a very useful benignant phantom were it presented with a true and inciting language. But unfortunately, be it owing to dullness of mind, be it owing to inertia or conservative and speculating selfishness or moral avarice of men, tradition often appears as a barrier and a hindering lie.

You, you Americans who have the luck of ignoring these spiritual barriers, you can throw your new energies towards the most free aspirations of life, for you are ripe with independence and with lived and conquered experience. Now you long enthusiastically for

an inward life of your own, for a literary, musical, theatrical and plastic expression of your own. You are eager for the conquest of a style of your own tuned to your daily life of sports and of struggles. For these reasons, I heartily dedicate to you this collection of ideas, of thoughts, of reasonings, of confessions, of divinations and of explanations on my tendencies and artistic experiments and on those of modern Europe. They have been sincerely and carefully chosen and are the results of an active and fruitful life, suffered and fought on the front of art during thirty years of faith and of courage.

Therefore, I hope it will interest you and that you will find in it matter for thought, for investigation and for spiritual diversion. May it guide you to creating and revealing conclusions and satisfactions!

FORTUNATO DEPERO

Hold on!

If in Alaska or in Turkestan a book were printed in Italian, the eventual ortographical mistakes and misprints would be, no doubt, excused. So I apologize for the inevitable mistakes contained in this book printed in Trentino and within a very limited space.

I was told that the words Heaven, Hell, Purgatory are not to be written with capital letters; I reserve to myself to correct as soon as I am back from one of these misterious and so much spoken of places; onlyt hen I will be able to give my opinion on the question.

Finally I authorize the reader to displace surplus capital letters and to put them were I out of my typographical taste have omitted them.

the hand

The hand is a plastic drama-psychological, magnetic and mysterious. It is a living instrument, autonomous and dependent at the same time. It is a being without eyes, without hearing and without speech; but it sees everything and speaks continually. It touches, caresses, scratches, feels, inserts, holds back, guides and takes away with the instinct of a blind musician and of an enchanted moulder. The fingers of the hand play on the keys of space the silent music of touch. It follows the foot-prints of instinct. In the dark, it searches like bats with tactile and seizing membranes. It goes along rough plains, clear canals, soft and velvety valleys, and slimy ravines with shivering tips. It goes along the rivers, streets and paths marked on its own palm; the writing of life and death.

Hands have shielded fingers and magnetic fluids. They are divine and diabolical, spiritual and animal at the same time. The hand kills man, strangles chickens and slays oxen; it roots out plants, beheads flowers and waters flower-beds.

One is drowning and his feverish hands ask for help on the water surface. One loves and with his hands he steals the flesh and soul of his beloved. One is brave and with his hands he faces, defies and wins. With his hands he dominates his nerves and keeps his will on the leash.

There are blue-shadowed serene hands, as cool as petals of roses; others are hot and surrounded with fire, scalding as burning coals. There are icy hands, flabby and indifferent, listless, lazy, abandoned, anemic: cold in greeting, hanging everywhere expressionless — on a terrace, on the arm of a chair, on the arm of the fiancée, on one's knees and at one's side, like inert rags, like dead broken branches.

There are rough hands, with straight fingers stretching into space like safe pocket rails, or with thick hanging fingers like knotty cudgels lying in wait. Hands holding in their fist hearts and brains, ideas, science and art.

Joyous hands with the heart radiating on the open palm. Hands

blessed by God and pierced by light; from whose solar wound flows the clear inexhaustible brook of holy generosity.

And then we have short, miserly hands, attached to the shoulders. Stumps condemned to perennial short-sightedness to whom touch, contact and expansion are forbidden. Hands doomed to concealment and to suffer their miserable brevity, their short fate.

Thieving hands, cruel, selfish, kleptomaniac, with magnetized tips, eager and greedy of other people's belongings. They seize all that is old or new, dirty or shining, inviting and repulsive in order to satisfy their longing to have, to possess, to rob, to snatch away, until the pocket is full and the house crammed, as long as their eyes see, their nerves allow and till the law does not put a stop to everything with a pair of handcuffs.

Sensual hands, warm, steaming, damp with permanent fever. Rude hands, unreasonable, suffering, false; creeping under the leaves along dangerous turnings, always lying in wait, seemingly asleep like vipers. Cunning, mute, in the shadow, almost invisible. As soon as they wake, they rear and quarrel, they flash like lightning, bite and jump like cats, groan like bulls and strangle like murderers.

There are diaphanous butterfly hands, falling like snow-flakes, rocking like gondolas, shivering like petals; who love veils and the moon, breath, pale light, anemia, long lingerings, silent love, romantic pages.

There are blessed hands: dedicated to the home, to duty, to peace, to tenderness, to honesty. Pink and brown hands, healthy, calm and sure, with a frank and tight greeting, with harmonious writing. These are modest hands, smelling of soap, slightly rough like linen and the crust of good bread. Always busy: in the water, in the oven, among soap foam; white in flour, green in salad, red in tomatoes. Italian hands in the kitchen, precious and blessed, to be kissed and venerated.

There are calculating hands, restless, intuitive, valuing everything. Fingers spinning on the volumes, weights and measures of objects, within other people's pockets and safes. From the thickness of a book, they guess the number of the pages; when clutching a handful of corn, they can say the exact number of its grains. Their palm is an infallible scale. Their tips know every kind of textile, of paper or of flour. They are expert hands of manufacturers and merchants.

There are holy hands that pray: covering a bent face. Hands united in a kiss of Faith and turned to the sky. Spiritual dive. All earthly joy and suffering enclosed within two vertical palms offered to Heaven with the warmth of vows and the ardour of prayers. Extreme kiss above matter. Point from which starts the spark of departure. Real antenna of the soul.

Then, there is the great hand of the mother country: immense, with a palm of blue sea and a back of green earth. With fingers of rock,

with knuckles of eternal snow, with phalanxes of Dolomites, with nerves of railway rails, with the blood of rivers. Hand stretched out in the sun, wrinkled all over with passions, arriving everywhere, protecting everybody. Fertile with harvests and with exquisite gifts. Let us offer our hands, like a thick hedge of reconstructive faith surrounding this hand, the mother of all hands.

But we must not forget the small, magical hand of the artist which rises above all others, giving a contour to what is invisible, moulding and painting what is adorable, seizing dreams, giving a voice to stones and humanity to clouds, giving flesh and bones to the vibrations of the rainbow and of the magic musical scale of the Universe. They are small hands, but the great hands of God have granted them the miraculous gift of transforming matter into spirit, of carrying the human heart to lofty heights and of transfiguring the face of creation.

to construct — (While others paint, I paint and construct).

To construct a chair means to get it made by a joiner, following one's taste and habit, for the kitchen, the dining room, the conservatory and so on. But one can have it made according to a definite drawing, to suit a special taste; therefore, it can have four, three or only two legs, one in front and one behind, and even it can have six legs or only one in the centre, according to the drawing, the style and the whim of the man who planned it. It can be a fixed or mobile chair, turnable and demountable. In any case, it will always be a well planned chair, well made, well constructed, firmly joined, requiring care and skill in the choice of its material and its technique, studied with taste and character, handy, comfortable and useful for resting.

It is the same when building a house or a palace. They, too, can be simple or complicated, rich or poor, for private or for public use; they can be planned with four, eight or twenty walls, straight or curved, plain or indented; they can be made with one or more floors, divided or decomposed with free calculations, with external and internal stairs, with terraces above and below, even with turnable floors; in short: with a free distributing play of spaces, of uses and of materials. And also this construction shall be perfectly made, built with skill and common sense. It may be ideated with creative freedom and architectonical freedom. We have ample proof of this in the various styles and epochs, in lands and races greatly differing from one another: exemplary expressions showing us the great fancy and architectonical boldness used in this field.

Even a bicycle should be constructed with all its necessary elements: wheels and handle-bar, pedals and brake, chain and tires. What I mean to say is that it should be skilfully composed with all its elements, wellfitted and screwed in, fixed or movable in their

right place, and, even in this case, liberty and fancy acts freely, according to use and fashion. We had, at first, ridiculous cycles with different-sized wheels, disproportionately large or small. Then we had normal cycles for men, women and children, monocycles for acrobats and racing motor-cycles, triecycles for transport and tandems for couples in love. A whole army of wheeled vehicles was born, amusing and mobilizing the whole world.

One does not only construct with stones, wood and metals, but also with cloths, textiles, and yarns of every kind. A tailor, for instance, constructs and makes, with cloth and scissors, clothes of all sizes and suitable to the most varied needs, whims, trades and uniforms. This is all the more true of a dress-maker who, in order to please feminine insatiability and fickleness, daily invents new creations, doing and undoing, lengthening and shortening, adding colors and laces, pleats and buttons, giving vent to all her inventive qualities of taste and fancy.

In short, one can construct with every material; construct one must in every trade or task, for to construct means solving problems in every field, reaching the conclusion and aim of one's set task or problem, be it professional or ideal.

Therefore, in my opinion, also in Art one must construct in order to attain the solution of a work and of a conception. The artist must set himself the task of facing toil, study, diligence, constancy and vehement application: in drawing, in plastic, in structure, which must be conclusive and resolute. He then has the right and the greatest of rights, if compared with other professions, of constructing with liberty of means and of conception. There should be no limitation in art, in inspiration, in the wonderful longing for rising, fancying and revealing.

It is obvious that we shall construct with all the means and laws taught us by the school, by tradition, with all the knowledge acquired through experience, with every known and unknown technique, but, at the same time, with all the objective or abstract liberty granted by talent and by the right of intuitive and creative geniality. The works which have resisted through centuries, works of every style, race and culture, are essentially constructed. Not only with more lasting materials, but also in technique and style. Thus I would intend every free and modernly conceived creation of art.

As for me, I like or rather I want to join carefully and firmly together different and contrasting motifs and elements suggested to me by inward vision and emotion: eyes and lights, legs and windows, noses and beams, rythm and sounds — internal and external -- near and distant elements. I wish to unite them with structural continuity, as if their union was inborn and necessary to a single organic and transcendent complex. Just as if constructing, from the material point of view, a chair, a house, a machine, a dress, an animal and human anatomy. Just as if constructing, from the ideo-

logic and spiritual point of view, a thought, a conception, a graphical tale. Just as if representing a new organic being, a new figurative existence, a new plant or a speaking vision belonging to the world of art. To construct, both spiritually and materially with the same technical and conceptual scruple, with diligent analytic and synthetic attention, developing element after element — objective or abstract — contrasting or similar — necessary to the complete harmony and life of the work.

For instance: as if the sonorous wave of the beating of a hammer on an anvil set out with a curved line, like a sudden wing of space attached to the hammer. As if the shout of a quarrelling man set out, in the shape of a funnel from his wide open mouth and projecting his sonorous and colored violence on the invested faces, objects and walls. Every transparent or luminous element, constructed as if of glass, carefully turned, shaped and defined like a plastic ray, a moulded reflection, like a concurrent, concomitant element aiming at the unitary and complete development of a single organic complex, of a definitive work of art. For, we must not forget that a work of art should be harmonious and complete, from head to foot, with clothes, flesh and bones, limbs and senses like a human being, a house or a machine; that is, with all its elements in their right place, with all its values working and organized. With chiaroscuro voids and shadows and with distances, symmetries and asymmetries, projections and excentric or concentric perspectives joined with order and harmonic gradual development, expressive and representative. Without prejudices or traditional influence, with daring boldness together with pondered attention and artistic conscience. A church-steeple grows on a head; a window opens in a breast; a lamp rises and burns amid the hair of a reader and the rays of light penetrate within the tresses and make an anatomical section of the nose, of the cheeks, of the forehead. A crystallized cutting face stands out from the splendour of a glass vase and pupils bulge out from the orbits of a struck man. In a drunkard the head rises, the legs are multiplied without control, the surrounding setting dances around him fluid and oscillating elements spread one on top of the other and multiply themselves.

This unexpected dynamic continuity must be studied by the painter with order, trimness and skill, with definitive clearness, with the care and scruples of perfect technique and of conscientious art.

This is what I mean when I speak of constructing in a work of art, in order to make a lasting creation, complete, grafted into space, time, evolution and history.

about realism and abstractism

The sufferings of artists at the cross-roads of these two ways are endless. Personally, I think I can grasp the problem. First of all,

I believe in a fundamental basis, that is, in the daily reality which I see every morning from my window, which I enjoy in the evening in my sitting-room or at my desk, which I often live in the country, in the big cities and on the high enchanting Alps of my Trentino. Therefore, I believe in trees, in clouds, in the sun and in the mountains; I believe in trains, in aeroplanes, in steamers, in skyscrapers – vivid, well-built and imposing. I believe, in short, in the various aspects of nature in all its forms and the clever constructive and inventive achievements of human genius.

I embrace a plane-tree – yellow, orange, green – glowing in the Autumn sunshine, like a golden mosaic set in the bluest of skies. I kneel down in front of a daring steel bridge, cast with bold audacity over a deep precipice or a wide river and supporting very fast trains. Even in front of buzzing dynamos, I reverently take off my hat. I open my eyes, filled with wondering admiration, at the foot of skyscrapers and of the Dolomites. I appreciate, in short, and I live with a passionate naturalistic and pantheistic love all the tangible reality which is around me. When I travel, I keep my nose close to the window so as to catch a glimpse of fugitive landscapes and of brightly-lit, metallic stations crowded with all kind of people. On the mountains, I am always a climber eager for clouds, rocks, woods and meadows of thousands of changeable colors. When I was crossing the Atlantic, I did not regret my country, for my eyes were gazing at the multicolored waves, at the effervescent, restless foam. I did not despise the skyscrapers and the subways while dreaming of a lonely cottage on the alp: on the contrary, I admired the tall houses, the daring architectures and the city speed conquered by man. I like reality when it is immediate, true and varied and I interpret it with the soul of a poet and painter, with the colors of joy, the transparencies of emotion, the irony and spirit of stylization. To the eye of an artist, reality appears changed, idealized, according to his temperament and his mood. Nature then belongs to the artist who paints, models and sings with his own voice and imagination.

The problem of reality and abstraction does not seem to me too difficult to solve. First of all, it is important to see reality, then to be able to interpret it and lastly to express this interpretation with convincing and clear originality, that is, with clearness and evidence. Images as limpid as water, drawing as real as flowers, constructive precision as that of machinery. Space, air, space, air. Colors washed in the sun, brilliancy of perspectives and of gears, visible and shining as in cars and planes.

I hate all that is dirty, badly painted and chaotic. The magic meaning of a painting is proportional to its clearness. The interpreted image and form are loftier when their clearness is crystal-like and metallic. Reality, as common painters understand it, seems to me

a useless, dead, smudged reality, dirtyish and affected, revealing a lack of intentions.

Of course, tastes differ and cannot be discussed; in a painting, I want stones to appear hard, houses to stand out with real corners, furniture to look turned, planed and fitted together. Waters must show whirl-pools and transparencies; I like cylindrical tree-trunks, far-away skies, mountains cut in stone. What I mean to say is that an artist must understand and express reality in his own way. For instance, I am gay, optimistic, exact and quick and so I understand nature: gaily, optimistically, exactly and quickly. I feel great joy in painting blue, red, violet houses; black, grey, russet trees against green clouds and dark waters; coral bushes and unreal flowers; well-shaped cows, horses moulded in speed, motor-cyclists fleeing amid solid splendours; faces with the colors of Carnival: ruddy noses, blue cheeks, eyes alive with metal and love. The gift of being able to give color, strength and gaiety to reality is indeed a grace of God. At the same time, I am attracted and inspired by the infinite and wonderful powers of the universe and by the ideal powers of our spirit. I intend those which we only feel but cannot see: the wind, the climate, joy, sadness love, home-sickness and faith.

To deny the realistic value of a work of art would be a great mistake — as also to deny the mere abstract, pure, idealistic values. Reality is a language necessary to understand one another, it is the life which surrounds us. Abstract values and abstract powers elevate and transform matter into ideality, spiritual joy and magic artistic essence. As I will further explain in detail, I was enlightened, during my Roman youth, by maestro Giacomo Balla who discovered and taught abstract painting in Italy. In 1916, we called ourselves «abstract painters» and for a long time I devoted myself to the painting of speed, to plastic equivalents, to the painting of sounds and noises. Futurism attracted me and made me better, gave me a new strength, showed me new fields and possibilities. For this, I must be grateful to futurism. Although I feel tied to my rocks and my country, although I am as obstinate as a mule, simple and plain, vegetarian, meat-eater and no T. T. — and therefore a realist with open eyes, a head on my shoulders and solid muscles — I am daily vivified by the most beautiful ideal powers God has granted us: faith, inspiration, enthusiasm, and I devote myself to the purest problems of art. On my banner, these words are written with letters of fire.

Someone asked me whether my ancestors came from the highest plains of Tibet, owing to my cheekbones, my eyes cut like two commas, my rapacious hawk-like nose. I don't know whether there is something Asiatic in my face and I don't care, but I do know for certain that there lives in me a mediterranean, constructive and idealistic passion of painter. A man without ideals has no back-bone; an artist who limits and shuts himself in reality, is not,

in my opinion, a real artist. To avoid immaterial beauties in a painting means taking away all inspiration. The power of the abstract strength of the spirit and of pure values enlightens and elevates life, work and daily reality.

academy

The Academy is certainly useful, especially in order to learn drawing, form, history, to become a good teacher, to get used to study and discipline. But not to become an artist. Art is without the walls of the Academy and of the School. For instance, I did not study at the Academy: I tried an entrance examination in order to be admitted to the Academy of Vienna, but I failed. I don't regret it, nor do I rejoice of my failure: I could have learnt many things which I do not know, but I might have never learnt many other things which a much lived and varied life has taught me.

Ugo Ojetti wrote once that, of the artists who made a name for themselves in History, very few ever went to the Academy and that of the many artists who came out of the Academy, only very few made a name for themselves in History. Academic methods might, perhaps, be renewed – teachers might be changed – and the windows of artistic universities could be thrown wide open so as to let in the air, vivid with light, of all artistic currents: the currents fighting their way in the streets, in the corridors of art shows, on the pages of art magazines. It would perhaps be wise to show the young students all the contemporary living life of Art, vibrating and struggling out of the closed school-halls and open their eyes to all the unexpected pictorial and plastic beauty and richness, experimented and revealed by a multitude of brains.

In my opinion, one must not deaden youthful enthusiasm within the closed life of a model of chalk or of flesh, of a show-window, of the posing foot-board. Classicism has had its great day. Now young people must live and squeeze out from life their own problem, their own task, their own painting and plastic, their own future. What has already been done has already been solved; now one must face what has *not* been done, what is new, with boldness and dissecting penetration. This, at least, is what I think of the Academy. Once, in New-York, I found on the table of one of my shows a leaflet regarding a course of lectures at a University – art lessons concerning the latest and boldest avanguard subjects: the problem of *«The Esthetics of Machinery»*, *«Plastic dynamism»*, *«Abstract Painting»*, *«The Painting of Speed and Sound»*, *«Simultaneous Impressionism»*, *«Expressionist Compenetration»* and so on.

I wonder why this does not happen in the country where Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, Carlo Carrà and Gino Severini were born, the artists who first ideated these new problems and revealed

these new fields of Art and who are now well-known and appreciated in the whole world.

Doors and windows of the Academies must be thrown open honestly and liberally if we want new ideas to live and thrive in them.

aeropainting

Kind of painting of aeronautical inspiration. Last experimental station of futuristic painting. We must here remember a forerunner: the Parisian painter Benito who illustrated the catalogue of the «Maison Blériot» with effective examples of impressionist aeropainting. It is a field of interesting research for which it is necessary to have really lived the life of a pilot in order to avoid insincerity and obvious pseudo- photographic tricks.

analysis

It is the opposite of synthesis. Care of details, great interest for little things, for the smallest secrets of every figure and object. Sometimes a detail can have more efficacy than a whole.

antipretty

It is a word that Umberto Boccioni invented or, rather, adapted to an artistic conception. It is a strong reaction to affected painting of feminine weakness, of studied bourgeois manner and to middle-class oleography. Drastic reaction of masses and of chiaroscuro cuts, of incisive deformation, of stylistic will, of relief and strength in the synthesis of the predominant lights and shades. Antiveristic and antisatisfying plastic liberty. Impulsive brutality of depriving the subject of all useless details, of all superfluous charm in order to reveal and to strip naked the architectural essential of plastic problem with strong antipretty will.

arabesque

Also called hieroglyph. Yesterday, in schools, one learnt how to draw and paint the veinings and shades of leaves, of marble, of butterflies and of feathers. To-day, in schools, one should also learn how to draw and paint the blendings of gears and the splendour of machines, the freely conceived abstract arabesques, the chromatic harmonies suggested by fireworks and by musical symphonies and the freely chosen graphic and colored abstractions, thus creating the taste, rhythm and capacity of the new arabesque.

mental architecture

We find, nowadays, many mistakes of judgment and misunderstandings, much prejudice and conceit: blunders and incongruities are continually heard. There exists a caddish, cacophonic and complicated frame of mind that has the effect of discouraging and of making one long for solitude: people who do not know what they are, but who feel themselves obliged to judge and to criticize foolishly, without knowledge, without competence, with thoughtlessness, ignorance and rash inconsiderateness. This is doubtless a total lack of mental architecture, of conscience, of honest common sense, of a linear, elementary and inbred instinctive and conquered education.

Before painting, before drawing, before writing, speaking, judging and criticizing, one must possess the alphabet and the measure of knowledge, of simple human respect and of critic discretion. In several of my shows, I often came across good parents with their children of 7-8-10 years of age who allowed themselves to comment my work and that of my distinguished colleagues with stupid and vulgar expressions, their words and behaviour being approved with pride by the good father and mother, more guilty than the children themselves.

This deficiency is deeply rooted: one must learn to teach and to think, to know and to have mental respect, to form for oneself a wise, well-balanced mental architecture. Then, perhaps, the public will be able to understand Art.

typographic architecture

It is that special architectural form suggested by typographic types which has been used with great efficacy in advertising artistic constructions, in pavilions, kiosks and advertising plastics of national and international exhibitions of decorative art and in industrial and commercial exhibitions. The painter Depero created, in 1927, the book pavilion of the Bestetti-Tumminelli and Treves publishing house at the international exhibition of decorative art at Monza, inspiring his work to this conception of typographic architecture.

apocalyptic

Fantastic, wonderful, prophetic revelation of a new spectral and dramatic world.

objective art

It is the art which respects the material, photographic reality of nature and depicts it exactly as it is and lies.

subjective art

It is the opposite of objective art. It is, indeed, that form of art through which the artist does not copy, but interprets, communicating to his expressions temperament and character, penetrating deep in the spirit of the subject and setting free secret, intimate, unknown values.

ascensional landscape

It is pencil drawing by Depero representing a group of houses with a village church-steeple in the middle. The perspective group rises from a cross-road and the walls, the roofs, the planes of light and shadow rise as if attracted by the sunlight. Even the clouds continue in the sky this ascensional perspective. It is a stylistic work and conception of elevation, of salient nature, a plastic landscape song to the sun.

experimental art

It is that form of art through which the artist is bold enough to evade from well-known, already tested forms, being anxious to attain something yet undiscovered and belonging to him alone.

asymmetry

It is the contrary of symmetry. Figures at double unequal faces. Repetition of the same form in a different, irregular way. Modern art has brought to light harmony in proportion, syncopation, sudden interruption, harmony of dissonances, uneven and asymmetric rhythm.

automaton

Mechanical figure and fantastic puppet of inventive conception, made with various matter. The painter Depero animated several of his paintings with these automatons of pure fancy: solid and transparent automatons, drawing their inspiration from the flora, the fauna and from machinery. They walk, dance, sit down, read, work and live in dream settings and landscapes, in fairy-like perspective and atmosphere.

avanguardie

An avanguardie painter is a painter wishing to be in the front ranks in the field of pictorial research; he is an artist who, with his

work and ideas, agrees with other artists having his same intentions and courage and working for the good of modern art and of rapid revolutions.

bickering with a theologian

Rovereto - Spring 1914.

Personal, polemic show of the first experiments of plastic dynamism. I had left Rome for Rovereto and, after having seen my father, I set myself to the organization of my futuristic show in a hall of the Cassa di Risparmio. The excitement is great. My condisciples surround me with noisy sympathy while another group gathers at the other end of the room - people who like a quiet living and distrust all that is new and who come there with the sole purpose of reaction and cutting criticism. At that time, even in Trentino, an anti-futuristic reaction was beginning to be felt. At the opening, the hall is crowded. The opposition team is headed by a distinguished priest — long, thin nose — a learned theologian, undoubtedly against all innovations. The gallery consists of my restless friends and condisciples. We begin to go round the show and I explain each drawing. In front of one of the largest intitled «Merry-go-round in full speed», the learned priest stops with decision, interrupts me and begins his attack. «What did you intend this drawing to be?» he asks. I answer: «You see, Professor, with this drawing I intended to fix down the dynamic apparition of the merry-go-round, when my eyes see it turning and the people and horses on it are fleeting, like tails of color, rockets of light, flashes of shadow, with very few details of which I can hardly catch a glimpse. You must understand, Professor, that a still merry-go-round that is not turning is one thing and that the same merry-go-round in full speed, enlivened by the voices and sound constituting a living complex, a whirlwind, is quite another thing, something which a clever painter may face at his will. Don't you think so, Professor?» But the Professor is not convinced: «My dear artist, what you say is allright, but the fact is that the vision which you pretend to have interpreted from the turning merry-go-round, does not appear clear and evident to one looking at your drawing and, in order to understand the meaning of your chaotic and illegible arabesque, it is necessary for you to give an elaborate explanation. Above your painting, you should pin up an explicative essay».

«Oh, Reverend Father, I have declared from the beginning that these drawings are experimental sketches and not definite works. Besides, I can assure you that they are far from difficult puzzles or mysterious hieroglyphs. It is only a matter of getting used to them and of understanding their meaning and what the artist intends. Do not try to see in them that which does not exist, but consider merely the chiaroscuro and chromatic vibration shown

by the drawing and suggested to the painter by the subject and title. Do you see? These are not tricks, they are drawings made in honest good faith by a painter who, believe me, knows how to draw and what he wants. The priest thinks a little and then: «Yes, yes, all this is all right, but it seems to me that you have lost sight of the purpose, of the principal task and true mission of art. Art must speak to everybody, it must be an easy language, quickly understood, able to express itself without any explanation whatever». «Just a moment, Professor: this is a conventional and comfortable conception. I agree with you when you say that a work of art must speak for itself, but the artist must create, this being his most important task; a work of art always speaks for itself, but it has also its own special language which one must know in order to understand. To create, in art, means to produce something personal, some interpretation as yet unknown, something exempt from plagiarism and assimilation. These interpretations, therefore, need illustration and perfecting.

And these results are obtained with time and through time. The public, the learned or profane observer must have patience and try to understand the artist with confidence, good will and also with respect. I do not say this for you, but for many conceited and ill-bred puppies which I have met in several shows and who criticize modern art with vulgar behaviour and disrespectful expressions. Have we not many examples of works that have been judged mad, incomprehensible, bound to be forgotten and which, on the contrary, as time went by, were acknowledged as worthy of great consideration and full of lofty meaning? How many artists, works and theories have found great opposition at the beginning and have won universal admiration after their death! Do you agree with me, my dear Professor?» «Oh, no, no, Mr. Depero; let us take, for instance, a great work and a sublime name: the «Divine Comedy» by Dante Alighieri. It is a work of such greatness and depth that it embraces all human knowledge; it touches and reveals the most secret mysteries of art and lyric, of science and thought, and, at the same time, it is clear, understandable and human and within reach of every reader». «No, professor, I don't agree, forgive me. The «Divine Comedy» has been read, studied and commented for centuries and yet it has not been completely discovered. As to its clearness at first sight, I still do not agree with you, for it is understandable only to a strictly limited number of readers who have been studying it for years with competency and passion. (Voices from the gallery: Hear, hear! Bravo, Depero!) The distinguished priest lights up, looks around, puts on his spectacles and, pointing with a long bony finger, as straight as a metal bar, he says very slowly and clearly: «Mr. Depero, down there is my Literature colleague, professor Zandonati, who teaches the subject which we are now discussing: undoubtedly he is more com-

petent and learned than I am in this matter and I am sure he will be able to answer you with more precise and convincing terms». The public turns towards the corner to which the finger of the theologian is still pointing and I stand on tip-toe (I am not very tall!), trying to see the literature professor and awaiting an answer. Suddenly, all talking stops: expecting silence in the hall. Professor Zandonati, a man with the soul of a poet, has been my teacher for several years. He is not the hard military master of northern methodical severity and of cultural rigour. He studied in Florence -- lived many years in Tuscany -- married a Roman girl, full of sensibility and heart. The imperative fore-finger of the theologian surprises him a little and, on the spur of the moment, he thinks out an adequate answer, respectful for both sides. His voice is thin and high, tired and calm. He answers: Dear Father, do not be angry with me, but, in this case I cannot help disagreeing with a colleague. On the basis on which you have started the discussion, I must say that my friend Depero is right, both for his logical explanations and for his rights of artist, interpret and creator. In the gallery, that is, in the farthest corners of the room occupied by my friends, a burst of applause breaks out. The walls tremble, the crowd wavers. Long live Zandonati! Long live Futurism! Hurrah for Depero! Down with pedants! Down with old traditions! and so on.... The hubbub of the students cuts short the discussion, the annoyed theologian retreats and, with him, all his disciples.

cat

All kinds of cats have been painted: white, grey and black cats, with sleeping or wide open pupils, mysterious and green; wild cats and house cats mongrels and Siamese, bony and well-fed, lying on costly carpets and calling their love on moonlit roofs. Depero has painted the multiplied, elastic motions of the jumps and feline leaps of the cat. (This painting is to be found at the Gallery of Modern Art of Baltimore, U. S. A.).

charlestone — (Documentation).

The *Corriere della Sera* of the 1/3-1927 publishes: Berlin - Feb. 28th - night — *«The "machine -dance" created in Russia»* Charlestone has been forbidden in Russia. A wire from Moscow now says that, according to the orders of the Government, a new dance entitled *«machine»* has been created. The arms of the dancers imitate the movement of the pistons of a steam engine while the feet beat the ground like heavy hammers. The music imitates the noises of a factory.

ANIHCCAM (word *«macchina»* - machine - written backwards)

OF THE YEAR 3000. It is a dance ideated by Depero. Movements, costumes, scenario and choir by Depero. Music by Franco Casavola. Interpretation and reproduction of the movements and noises of machinery. This dance was performed in 28 cities of Italy during the tournée of the new Futurist Theatre headed and organized by Alfredo De Angelis in the Winter of 1924.

cinema and dynamic painting

The cinema has given a strong contribution to the speeding up of our impressionability. Speed and simultaneousness of images in cinema are much more intense than in life. A few hours before the screen can take us from the wonders of an African forest to the smartest health-resort; from the small lake to the boundless ocean; from the silent provincial town to the noisy, crowded metropolis. Very long, endless journeys, with all kinds of vehicles and through all kinds of ways are made possible in a few minutes. Sudden, rapid dramas and tragedies (cold showers for the public) and then, soon after, peace, smiles, sunshine: contrast of moods and of images. The modern painter has doubtlessly found the cinema a rapid development of his own spirit of observation and he has thus become unable to localize for hours his own graphic attention upon a single, static image. We must, therefore, consider the cinema as the real teacher and prompter of the dynamist of modern art. When the painter G. Balla painted the hands of a violin player: agitated, leaping and jumping, intersected by the vibrations of the chords, set down in their cinematic nervous passion, it was criticized, with much rashness and misunderstanding, as a cinematic trick and an insane pictorial acrobatism. When the same Balla, in 1909, showed his famous picture «dog at the leash» in which is painted the multiplied vibration of the dog's paws and of the feet of his mistress, people were greatly shocked. These two works, which to-day are to be found in two important Galleries abroad are of a significant historical importance, for they are the record of the first steps of a painter who intended to fix on the canvas, with renewed technique and creative sensibility, a phenomenon of vision in motion.

Futurist painters, made eager by passionate pictorial research — impressionist, divisionist, expressionist and cubist — (the first cinematic aspects of the picture) were strongly carried towards intensely modern and revolutionary manifestations of art by the dramatic speed of cinema. They created, in fact, that plastic dynamism that influenced and characterizes the most interesting and expressive painting of to-day.

Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, Luigi Russolo, Gino Severini, Mario Sironi, Fortunato Depero, Enrico Prampolini and many others exhibited at Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Rome, Milan and New-

York paintings of explosive dynamism and of true, violent cinematic inspiration.

See, for instance, the subjects of their works:

Trains starting and trains arriving», «Speed of racing horses», «Speed of cyclists and motorcyclist», «Sporting competitions», Air raids and war subjects of all kinds, machines in motion, thunderstorms and a great amount of paintings inspired by 'planes: orchestra of a thousand colors, compositions of a thousand shapes. It was an amazing cinematic painting erupted by the mechanic dynamism of a life quite different from that of the past. And therefore: an old or passatist painting is to a futurist painting as an old, faded and static photograph of fifty years ago is to a dynamic talkie of to-day.

cinematic

By cinematic drawing and painting one means the rythmical repetition and connection of the pencil-strokes and images which are drawn and painted in order to represent the displacing of a body or image from one spot to another, or the gesture of an arm or leg in motion.

clearness

A clear line, clear words, clear form, clear colors, exact conceptions. Clearness of thoughts, of ideas, of opinions. Perfect vision of the goal to be attained and of the way to work for it. This is what I intend in art by the word «clearness» and I hope also to be able to write every chapter of this book with clearness of form and of contents.

compenetration

In drawing and painting, compenetration means to insert a profile or a form into another, that is, to represent simultaneously two or more images, either by putting one on top of the other or by partial compenetration. It is a technical conception used by cubist and futurist painters and also employed on a large scale in films.

composition

This is the point, my dear colleague. Calm and serene reality and pictorial sensibility are all right, as also the abstract arabesque, evident plasticity, still life and so on; but I should also like to see what are your powers of composition, the intensity, the originality and the extension of your inventive and composing talent.



plastic scene for the russian-ballet: the song of the nightingale by strawinsky - rome 1917

f. depero



plastic dances · new puppet theatre · rome, april 1918

f. depero

constancy

To work with method and elasticity from 7 to 12 and from 1 p. m. to 6 p. m. and, may be, again from 8 to midnight, under the voluntary yoke and the daily goad of one's own task, a professional task, a task of creative and constructive pleasure, of ideological, artistic mission: following the rythm of the sun which rises and sets, of the moon appearing and disappearing, of the heart and of the watch, beating in unison, of the gathering ant and of the picking bee, of the drop piercing the rock and of the boring trepan.

contents

Nowadays, we use the expression «pictorial and plastic contents» when speaking of a modern painting, when we wish to indicate the quality and quantity of the pure values of color and form expressed and intensely interpreted possessed by a pictorial work.

continuity in space

It is a definition of Boccioni. His sculptures, drawing their inspiration from a racing athlete, from struggling muscles, aim to fix in space the plastic volume of the strength exploding from the human body and to mould the speed of gestures and the continuity of the impetus. These are the formal and abstract equivalents which Boccioni called «continuity in space».

courage

To have courage in art means to possess a dauntless will enabling one to go beyond what has already been done and tested: the courage to believe in and to fight for daring revolutionary ideas, the courage to give form and shape to one's own ideas and plastic power to one's own originality. Violence in color, synthesis in line and form, transcendence in construction.

creation

To create means to make something out of nothing and, in art, to represent something unexisting, enigmatic, which the mind of the artist can perceive by intuition and through imagination. It is akin to the word transfiguration and begins with deformation.

cutting criticism

A cutting critic is a man who, for love of contradiction or for stupid and evil reaction, often for envy and physical defectiveness,

other times for unjustifiable conceit, speaks ill, insinuates and does his best to misunderstand the work of a brave artist especially when the artist is an Italian. At the same time, this kind of critic is ready to praise, dishonestly and obediently, a bad painter or a plagiarist coming from abroad. This happens frequently in Italy, for it is one of the incurable Latin diseases.

decorativism

That kind of painting tending to decoration or deriving from it: that picture with an eminently decorative character. It must not be considered a cheap element if, together with decorative sense, the work possesses plastic and pictorial contents and strong creative qualities. The too simple accusations devised against artists whose works, besides having certain artistic value, contain also decorative elements, are foolish and unfair. And yet, in the works of distinguished masters which have never been calumniated, we can guess decorative virtuositities. (See Botticelli).

dustbin

Being a man who likes his house clean and tidy, I advise every artist to keep in his study a large dustbin, better if metallic and of a pleasant shape, in order to gather in it, daily, all the dirt of the slander, wickedness and calumny falling on his name and work. It is a very useful object for the cleanliness of one's workroom and a very hygienic one for the peace of one's mind and for the success of one's work. Do not forget the dustbin!

education

To come back to the subject of ancient and modern art, my opinion is that he who has not been in the least educated to art and has no interest for it will never be able to understand either ancient or modern art. The key is one: aptitude and education. He who understands Egyptian rhythm and stylization, the character of the Assyrian, of the Indians, of the Greeks, of the Primitive, of the Renaissance, will have no difficulty in understanding our «nineteenth-century». I think that it is artistic education that is lacking.

It is lacking in schools, in academies, in the press, at the radio, in the house. And, therefore, it is lacking in the mind of too many people who think art a superfluous luxury, something smart, an easy and useless pastime.

In our country there is plenty of conceit: every one thinks himself endowed with artistic talent, with the right and competence of judging. These two mistakes must be corrected. It is not enough to know dates, historical references of paintings, of artists, of

schools. Erudition is not understanding. It is necessary, on the contrary, to know the progressive stations of artistic evolution and also the reasons which have made the greatest artists dig into the future their opening to new ways of art.

Artists should be loved, heard, surrounded by the interest to their work. We should not wait for the death of an artist in order to discover his genius, his merit and his sorrow.

elasticity

It is the contrary of rigidity. Understanding and elastic mentality, in art, mean to admit and understand the opinions of other people who may honestly see art from a different point of view and interpret it with a different conception. A *passatist* (see «*passatist*») is lacking in mental elasticity. This should also be a quality of the unprejudiced critic who, together with an honest conscience and a sense of generous criticism, should also possess an intelligent elasticity, a great critical and not polemic agility, worthy of this wilful century.

evolution

Also a painter has a right to evolution. You may say: — Evolution is all right, renovation is a noble task, but one must attain them with human and comprehensible examples and forms.

— I agree. But form, examples and contents concern the painter and not the public. It is not the public who renovates a ship, a machine, a dress style and science: it is the specialist, the architect. Therefore, pictorial renovation falls to the painter alone.

— But evolution in all fields develops gradually, while modern painters exaggerate in drastic changes and precipitous revolutions.

— You are wrong. Everything has been done step by step. It is the fault of the public who has not followed in due time the progress of artists. Had the public walked along with us, it would have come to our conclusions and we should have reached together the same aims of understanding.

Besides, everyone knows that evolution of all kinds has always met with difficulties and infinite obstacles: these same difficulties and obstacles hinder the progress of the artist. The New has always been desired and yet it has always been received with mistrust, with envy, and, often, with slander.

All that you admit and admire to-day was, yesterday, fought and despised. Therefore, all that you fight and despise or do not understand to-day will probably be acknowledged, understood and admired to-morrow.

It is the fatal, but cruel rhythm of evolution.

expressionism

That kind of painting, mostly of a simultaneous character, which to impressionist, cubist and dynamic values has added psychological values of dramatic expression and of sensational novelty. Russian and Slav avangarde painters have distinguished themselves for this kind of almost literary simultaneousness.

fairy-like

It is one of the characteristics of magic painting. The sky, the background, the atmosphere, the things, the animals, the flowers, the plants, the houses, the perspectives and the colors which we find in dreams and in fairy tales. In my opinion, the art of painting is the art of giving wonder, surprise and charm by means of form and colors. Enchantment is a synonym of fairy-like and indeed I want my painting to contain «the new magic».

fancy

That is: the talent, the will, the aptitude, the task and the pleasure of graphic, pictorial and plastic invention.

Pure fancy: to draw, to paint and to mould forms and figures, landscapes and scenery, visions of a world that has been merely dreamt, daringly stylized and organically presented, following the rules of technique and of harmony.

If we visit a well-known castle, a famous church, a notorious museum or if we look through some good collections both of ancient art and exotic, western or eastern, nordic or tropical art, we find a definite fancy specifying a race, an epoch, a characteristic mentality and also a boundless freedom of figure and style. Hieroglyphs of all kinds, shining divinities, transcendental symbolisms; fairy clothes, cuirassed soldiers, horses and polychrome harnesses, ceilings and pulpits ornamented with marquetry or sacred and profane mosaics of a rich and free eurithmy. Looking at all this, we are compelled to ask ourselves: it is possible that to-day we are so poor, so homogeneous, so limited to the usual domestic, middle-class subjects, smelling of school show-windows, of mean trade, of narrow-minded amateur provincial esthetics? Is not art the great fairy-tale, the landscape of legends, the transfiguration of the universe, the hymn of harmonies, of dreams, of the world moving within the rare and lofty soul of the exceptional artist and dreamer? Why does one not give vent to imagination, to a fancy expressed and modelled with subjects inspired by the multiform life of to-day, so rich of new elements? A new fancy, a fancy drawing inspiration from these modern times, a healthy, lyrical imagination in con-

trast to materialistic realism, commercial art, old-fashioned traditions, money selfishness.

Transparent flora and metallic fauna. Liquid landscapes and constructed illuminations. Moonlight insects; insects generated by lathes and by dynamos; lights, automatons, objects and tools of a wonderful, dramatic, formal inutility. Fire coming from eyes; flames rising from fists and from hearts. Reflections sharpened by crystals and water. Mountains turned upside down, houses and cows wheeling in the whirl-pools and spiral of the wind. Floreal women, flying dishes and fountains of butterflies: an eruption of gay and colored fancy, a clever apocalyptic game of invented forms. All this is lacking in art, to-day, for the courage of imagination is failing and people seem to consider fancy as a sin, a licence to be condemned, a morbid and mad lucubration, a world forbidden by esthetics.

Dear painters, where are the rights of stylization and of expressing our changeable inspiration? There is never enough exaggeration in art — courage is boundless — colors and forms are never lighted and exalted enough. There are great riches as yet unexplored and it is nature itself which daily teaches unlimited fancy by offering inexhaustible facts of transcendental, fantastic inspiration. Think of the modest snail, carrying its house on its back and moving with its multiple eyes, jutting in and out, getting short and long, just like tentacles. Think of fire-flies with phosphorescent stomachs, of bats, of flying and luminous fish, of corals, of submarine fauna and flora; think of tropical jungles, of volcanoes and of earthquakes and then tell me whether nature, that nature which everyone pretends to love, to respect and to understand, is not the greatest and most daring teacher of imagination. If the snail has mobile eyes which it can shorten and lengthen at its will, why should we not create masks with hundreds of wheeling, projecting eyes? Why should we not take a skull and paint, blooming from it, the symbols or figures swarming within the human mind? If the face of the lovely pansy is streaked with the most delightful arabesques, why should we not decorate and color the portrait of our sweetheart with the most unreal chromatic shades?

No, my dear friend, mine are not peculiar ideas. The fact is that painting consists of painting plus fancy and that music consists of music plus fancy and therefore our task is pictorial — musical — inventive. All this has very little in common with the materialism and the monotony of the daily reality of still lives.

When Rossini created his music, he was carried away in the world of creation and did not sit lazily in front of a dish of pasta asciutta. When Dante conceived and wrote the «Divine Comedy», his mind was not (at least, so I imagine) only on this earth, but, flying in the world of art, he took the planet, dissected it then rebuilt

and moulded it, according to his taste and whim and with free imagination. He descended in the vortex of volcanoes. He rose to the ethereal spirals of the heavens and explored the most mysterious paths of the earth and of the human mind. He projected himself in the after-life and in the most dazzling atmospheres by creating a hell, a purgatory and a paradise, thus putting together an immortal masterpiece.

Therefore, if Dante is great, and no one doubts or denies it, it is because he was a poet of unexhaustible planetary and supernatural fancy.

Fancy is found, more or less, in every brain; but the boy who has often grown in the atmosphere of scholastic pedantry, is often compelled — sometimes without his noticing it — to reduce, to modify, to stifle his fancy, being bound by traditional currents and conventions, and so, when he becomes a man, he reaches that normal mental setting which is synonym of middle-class ideology, of anti-new and of anti-fantastic.

On my part, I am glad to have always listened to my inner voice and to have given free vent to fancy.

to fancy

Happy freedom of the mind, of thought and of the hand in order to imagine, to think, to describe and to draw unreal things, emotions and figures; in order to enjoy inmost satisfactions, secret joys and to conceive ethereal visions of abstract meaning and unreal charm.

flower pot

It is an oil painting of 1946. It was shown for the first time in Milan at Depero's personal show, at the Camino Gallery in Via Montenapoleone. It represents a group of mountain flowers and plants, stylized with a definite colored-plastic sense and drawn with constructive organic order. Thick plants, hard flowers, almost crystal-like. Brown and dark green colors. The large vase lies on a plastic, decorative table-cloth, painted with crossing shades. The sharpened flowers are carmine red, well-shaped, coral-like. The back-ground is light grey and blue: vaporous, transparent, enhancing the almost surrealist floreal group.

flowers

Flowers have been painted in all manners and in all epochs. Famous painters of all nationalities loved floreal painting and specialized themselves in it. Yet, I have never met anybody interested in the structure of the flower, not from the botanical and scientific

cal point of view, but from a structural, architectonic point of view: with constructive analysis, synthesis and fancy. I worked at this with card-board, a very suitable material for the purpose.

I made large and small flowers, geometrizing them, inventing solid corollas of almost mechanical appearance, imagining tubular sections and tentacular, indented gearings. I made a small group which I later developed to become the well-known plastic scenario adapted to the Russian Ballet of the Diaghilew company «The song of the nightingale» by Igor Strawinsky. I am still interested in these plastic floreal creations which have given the subject to some of my latest paintings (1945 - 46 - 47).

This floreal world, constructive and reconstructive, is for me a field rich of new beauty, of unknown and revealing plastic and pictorial splendor.

In 1917, during one of his visits to my studio in Rome, Diaghilew, looking at a cardboard group of my flowers, said: «You are the new Rousseau». Henri Rousseau is the French painter who painted landscapes, figured compositions, animals and special panoramas of enchanting flora, with expressive virginity, with suggestive magic, inspired delicacy and great originality.

I think that the difference between my floreal figurations and Rousseau's is this: while in Rousseau the flora is primitive, wild and of delightful real inspiration, even if naively but poetically represented, my floreal compositions are of modern stylization, of vitreous and metallic fancy, of transcendental virginity and of constructive and inventive boldness.

geometrical splendour and steel style

The definition of geometrical splendour, in painting, refers to those luminous values — prismatic with metallic flashes and with shining plastic — emanating from the railway stations, harbours, factories, steamers, shops and machines of to-day. It is a clever definition specifying the aerodynamic atmosphere of this twentieth century of steel. With the words «steel style», the Author wishes to indicate the character and style of our times, dominated by a metallic splendour and by a modern way of living and of building: a life having quite different tastes and conceptions, a life suggesting and pretending a style of its own. And, indeed, this new «steel style» as Depero calls it, is, to-day, happily thriving in every country.

the new fantastic

Let us go to an art exhibition in Rome, in Venice, in Paris, in New-York, in a provincial town, anywhere.... What do we find? Large paintings and small paintings. Sculptures of various matters and proportions. Winter and Summer landscapes, still life, portraits,

nudes of all kinds. Finished and sketched works, some cleverly painted and well composed, others half-way between museum and free creation. Many drawing inspiration from life, some expressed with careful intentions, serious, severe, recalling the nineteenth century, others of a decided twentieth century character, of avanguard, aerial and futurist. The variety is undoubtedly great and instructive, talent appears evident. But I have noticed something: the almost complete lack of an element which, in my opinion, is important in art: fancy.

to geometrize

To an avanguard painter, to geometrize means to give geometrical form to lights, to shadows, to color zones, to volumes, to all those values which the painter wishes to enhance, with exact geometric character and style.

hotel

As there are hotel thieves, I could call myself a hotel painter, for fate has contrived that I should paint pictures, placards, and write articles in many hotels of Rome, Milan, Paris, Turin, Venice and New-York. At the Hotel Du Nord in Rue de Bourgogne 44, Paris, I painted the picture «Train — inn + cyclist» for the international exhibition of the «Art d'aujourd'hui» 1926. At the Hotel «La Fenice» of Milan, at Porta Venezia, I painted two psychological portraits of F. T. Marinetti and of the pilot F. Azari. In New-York, at the New-Transit Hotel, 461 West, 23rd Street, I even set up a studio and a permanent show. These are a few examples to justify the definition of hotel painter which could be mine.

impressionism

Impulsive painting of rapid, sincere tonal and formal impressions. Drawing is approximate and contour smudged. The impressionist painter is particularly interested in color and devotes himself to the search of light and of immediate efficacy. In Italy, belonging to this movement are, first the Tuscan «macchiaioli» and then the Lombard impressionist painters and sculptors. It is a typically French movement, of subtle plastic and chromatic sensibility. To it belong also the divisionists (lineists and pointists) who drew their inspiration from the solar spectrum, that is, from the division of color and the fundamental colors so as to obtain a luminous vibration, suggested by the scientific principle.



f. depero

india-rubber devils - (oil 1919) property john mattioli - milan



LA "GRANDE
SELVAGGIA."
(dal teatrino nel
ventile)
BALLI PLASTICI - 1918
ROMA
(teatro dei piccoli)

F. Depero

the great savage for the ballet the savages - plastic dances - rome 1918 orchestrated by f. malipiero

improvisation

One can improvise a verse, a sketch; one can suddenly have a good idea; but a work of art cannot be improvised, for it requires time, study, toil and suffering. I am an enemy of improvisation. Unfortunately, there is much improvisation in art to-day.

to interpret

To see and understand the beauty of nature and then translate it, with artistic means, into works of art. To impress into everything one sees and enjoys a personal valuation, according to one's decided temperament and character.

i know all about him...

I took part in a show with a few paintings and tapestries. I was alone in my section when I noticed that a group of people, led by a man who kept on chattering, was coming near. As soon as this talkative man saw my works, he stopped suddenly and exclaimed with a loud voice: «Here he is! Of course, it is he. I know his work. He is the maddest of madmen. But I know him very well, you know, for he is a friend of my cousin. I know all about his troubles and adventures: he goes from one sequestration to another, fleeing continually from town to town. If you ask him if a painting of his represents a cow, he will answer you it is a table and if you ask him whether it is a table, he will say it is a cow. If you ask whether one of his tapestries represents a parrot, he will tell you it is a cyclist. Really crazy — I know him — he is quite mad. I was amused and rather curious, so I joined the group, put him a few questions and finally asked him what type of man this Depero was. The answer was prompt: «An extraordinary man, with a big nose, spirited eyes, tall, as crooked as a magician and a neck-tie always flapping about. But the exceptional thing is to hear him speak: he tells such amazing things....» I listened to him for some time and then said abruptly: «May I introduce myself.... I am Depero .

Ha became yellow-red-green-bowing-trembling, apologized a thousand times and began to flatter me, amid the laughter and surprise of all his friends.

i know giacomo balla

I have not seen him for many years and I do not know what he is painting to-day. He was my artistic encounter in Rome in 1914. My mother had just died. There was an acrid smell of war. I was tormented by the longing of going to the capital. Up here (in Tren-

tino) the circle was limited; black and yellow, and its diameter was short. Therefore, with a few coins in my pocket and a small bundle, I took the through train to Rome. After some months of trials and after the first hard contact with reality, I made the acquaintance of Prampolini, Sironi, F.T. Marinetti and Giacomo Balla.

Balla was my first real stimulator. He had also been teacher and inciter of Boccioni, Spadini and other artists. The first time, I arrived at his studio pale, shy, with my nerves on edge for the desire of learning all I could and with wide open eyes so as to impress in my mind all the new world which was to be revealed to me by this daring and, by now, classic painter. Balla's studio was a floating room on a rock shaped like a house. The rock rose on the high, green waves of the Villa Borghese garden, at its highest point, where the lions of the Zoo roar and the horrid hyenas laugh.

1915 — As I came back from the front, ill, with my bones covered by a sheath of yellow and green skin, I saw again the workshop of this master. It was bursting with tricolored singing; the artistic front had there undergone the brilliant apparel of patriotic demonstrations, of air raids and of tragic shooting: blooming of bombs, corollas of lights and pistils of agony; spirals, strokes, ellipses and lights of an immense fire: black points and shining blades crossed by blood-red writing: all the arabesques of war, of the new, violent passion.

Balla is, perhaps, the only artist who from the war drew the first lines, forms and elements of steel style. From his canvases come singing voices, conceived as prismatic, brightly colored forms. His landscapes are rich of abstract forms and of elastic clouds, pierced by tricolored flashes. These flashes leap up and radiate from the aerial whirlpools of the crowd, winding along geometrical houses and swarming squares.

Giacomo Balla, born in Turin on July 21th 1874, now lives in Rome. He is an extremely personal self-made painter. He created paintings of a politic character and of pure lyrism. In his early years, he also made paintings of a clever realistic virtuosity. He was intense in coloring and solid in chiaroscuro. He has exhibited his paintings in all important shows, both in Italy and abroad, and the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome has many of his works. I remember him as a short and almost round man with a red face and a small, hard and sharp beard: pins of pungent irony flash from his blue eyes. He is always looking, searching, dreaming and discovering. He can stand for hours on end at a street corner and there he catches, penetrates and analyses the strangest vibrations, the most difficult chromatic problems, the most amazing aspects of reality. He divided the color of a jet of water and of a sunbeam. He fixed on canvas the mathematical, geometrical, almost

scientific sense of the luminous divisionism of a large arc lamp. A scientist and a painter, he depicted real moods and medianic fluids of invisible reality. He moulded the fan of a racing automobile. He painted the revolving wheel, the glassy speed of the windows, the fleeing landscapes and organized on canvas these pictorial vamps with a sense of masterly unity. Prospective science, coloristic impasting and surprising plastic stand out from his paintings. He analysed the flight of the swallow and the air, rhythmically beaten by the wings. He painted the step of man and the rhythmical writing of the paws of a jumping dog and this after having painted rough, hairy and shining matters and firm, almost speaking figures with the skill of a great painter.

Balla was indeed a realist painter of an imitative fastidiousness and of an objectivity which will not easily be surpassed.

In the picture «Bankruptcy», for instance, representing the door of a modest shop doomed to bankruptcy, the roughness and the streaks of the wood, the wrinkles of the wall, the brightness of the stone, the veil of dust, the minute details are of a palpable evidence. This shows a masterly technique and an undoubted skill and these were, indeed, the qualities he used for his thorough study of the problem of speed and of abstraction.

Balla's chief paintings should be considered real discoveries which could stand together with Marconian diagrams and with the scientific tables of a radiologist.

jacopoizzi, the artist and engineer of the mobile luminous picture

Paris - November 1925. We take a boat for S. Cloud — a spot made famous by great novelists, says Marinetti. Along the Seine, grey, rusty, smoky landscapes — poor, deserted houses — miserable dwelling-places made up with the waste of the metropolis — tramcars, buses, old motor-cars falling to pieces — cottages made up with packing-cloth, iron-plate and branches. A small, black factory is smoking — the suburbs are silent — the wrack thrown back by the waves of the big city is mysterious.

With us is also the Roman poet and humorist Luciano Folgore. We are greatly amused by his pungent, sharp wit, by his improvised rhymes and parodies. Marinetti's laughter is an enlivening sunbeam. We arrive at S. Cloud: a punch, a sandwich, a little wandering here and there and then we start back. Fog — darkness. On the deck of the boat it is almost cold. Lights, near and far. A reddish sky. We pass slowly under several bridges. Sudden, dazzling, the Eiffel Tower appears — high, powerful, alight with a thousand lights. Alternately, they compose a gigantic, mobile and amazing luminous publicity. The word «Citroën» vibrates — radiates, three hundred metres high, with enormous letters. It is a spectacular vision of typographic column, of advertising incandescence, con-

sisting of letters which gradually become stars, multi-colored comets, rockets and fire-work fountains. They glitter and stand out against a smoky sky and a mild, flat setting moon.

Lower down, on the bridges, trains with lighted windows keep on passing and crossing, whilst, under the arcades, polychrome rains are pouring and the waters belch forth iridescent rainbows. The Seine is colored and rutilant with a thousand lights for the World Exhibition of Decorative Art. Our boat glides on the speckled, trembling oil of the river. We are astonished and speechless at the sight of this gigantic, luminous, mobile picture, a picture of electro-dream, created by an Italian artist and engineer: Jacopozzi. Now he is dead, like many others; but I am certain he would have agreed with my manifest dealing with the work of art in motion.

joy

The intimate, intense pleasure we feel when we see that the seed we have generously sowed is thriving and blooming; when we see that a fine, complete work of art has come out of our hands; when we see that a flower which has never existed is budding from our fingers.

liberty — (artistic)

The liberty of drawing what one wishes and as one wishes, of painting what one wishes and as one wishes. To represent with boldness and audacious conscience all that the human brain can freely conceive, without and beyond all scholastic narrow-mindedness and theoretic limitation.

still life

Any subject consisting of objects, of tools, of any inanimate element, lying in inert order or disorder. These subjects are used in schools for the purpose of perspective or pictorial practice and in many ancient and modern compositions as completing elements. Many painters of today use them and abuse of them for the sake of expeditiousness and style. Still life was and still is a favourite subject of cubists and a polemic theme for futurists.

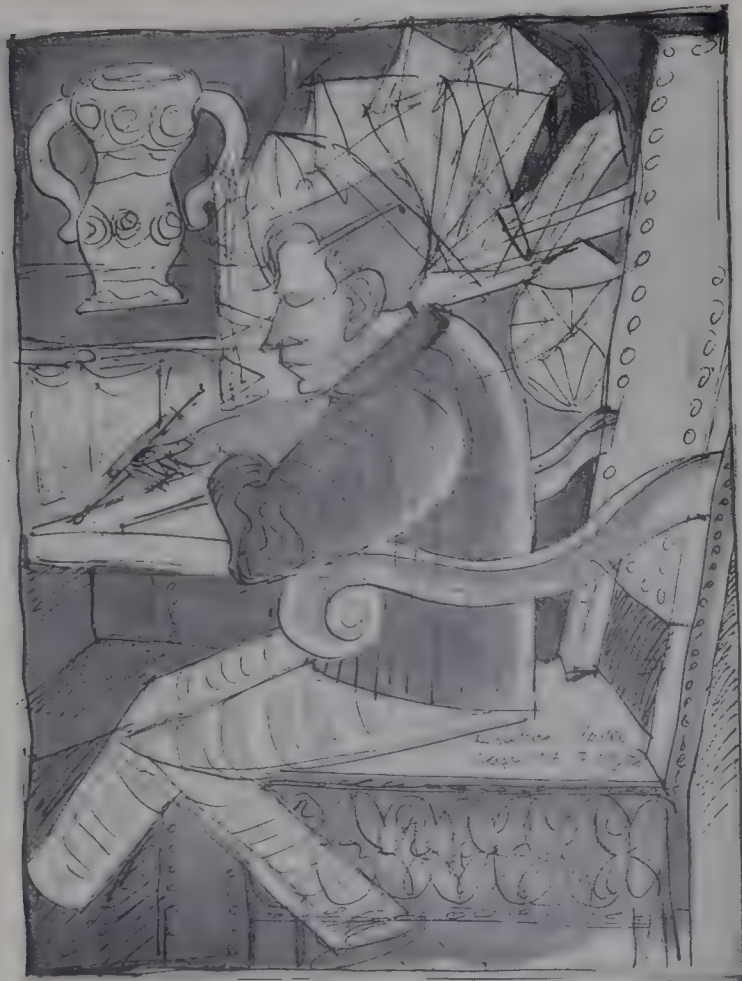
still life alive

It is a definition which the Author opposes to «still life» and which he uses to indicate the subjects of still life vivified by him thanks to an abstract or objective element, unexpectedly intervened with the purpose of lighting or of dynamizing contrast.

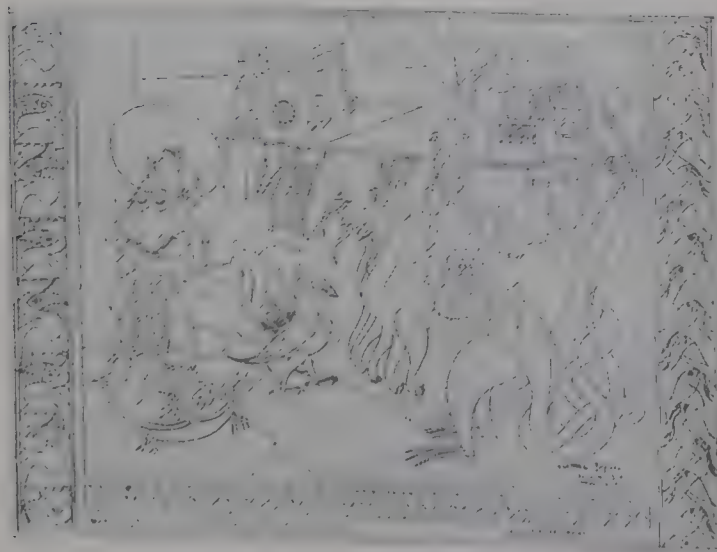


pencil sketches - f. depero





pencil sketches - f. depero





Simultaneità
spaziale - F. Depero

F. Depero

pencil drawing • 1926



in the inn and on the street outside • (pencil sketch 1925)

L. depers

likes and dislikes of foreign things

The artist, as also every sensible and intelligent man, should not be prejudiced against all that comes from abroad only because it is foreign and speaks a different language; but, at the same time, he should not kneel down and adore servilely with a gaping mouth all the foreign mediocrities often coming across the border. Common sense is necessary, as also intelligence and careful, honest judgment to be used with equal taste and balance both for our and for other people's merits.

madness

A sad word, if understood in the sense of illness. Only once I have visited a lunatic asylum and I do not wish ever to see one again, for the sight was hard to bear. But the ordinary public criticized as madness also every form of new and unusual art. Marinetti used to reply to the hostile public that he preferred his own madness to the wisdom of critics and traditionalists. Being myself an innovator, I quite agree with him and say that the most intense emotion is that of getting hold of a piece of reality and of transforming it with genial, mad inspiration into a beautiful and daring transfigured work of art.

misunderstanding

Experience has taught me that misunderstandings are among the most frequent stumbling-blocks preventing one to make quick progress with perfect harmony.

You say A and the critics understand B; you say C and the public hears D; you say E and the sham friend interprets F. A primer of artistic language is, therefore, necessary. One of the purposes of this work of mine is, indeed, that of explaining many misunderstandings and harmful equivocations (if possible!). Other artists and writers will help me in this task.

modernolatry — (Modern worship).

Boundless love and passion for all modern things: modern clothes, modern houses, modern plays and dramas, modern art, modern life, modern cities, modern customs, modern quick means of transport, modern emotions and dynamism. He who feels and loves all this is a worshipper of modernism.

mosaic

Stone mosaics and Venetian, Byzantine glass enamel mosaics are well known. Lately, we have had the modern pictorial mosaics of Gino Severini and the cloth and «Buxus» mosaics of Depero. «Mosaic of volumes» could be a definition for some paintings of Depero representing a mosaic of plastic volumes set one near the other.

the nineteenth century

The nineteenth century was realist: the painter was in front of flesh and bone reality. The reality which we see daily, which we can touch and hear, vibrating with blooming branches, with running, foaming waters, with washerwomen at the torrent or at the fountain, with cows at the trough and in the meadows, with shining, firm skin on evident anatomy. Animals, waggoners and peasants in the Summer heat or under the silver rain. Mowers and sowers, ploughing and harvesting, home life and country life. Familiar symbols, rough and simple, representing common morals and healthy, idyllic poetry. Shepherds, fishing, hunting, the slow, daily step of seasons. Fine bunches of grapes, beautiful baskets of apples and peaches. A nature depicted and painted with love and exactness, with diligent, strict and honest analysis. Pondered and conscientious technique. A visit to a gallery of the masters of the nineteenth century must be considered a duty and is also a cause for sincere emotion. The nobility of intention and the hard work of these masters of silence and of toil, the technical magic of the brush, the universal humanity of their subjects inspire awe and respect. And, indeed, their paintings should be kept in mind by some amateurish painters of to-day, shallow and of uncertain conscience. Silence and meditation, toil and conscience are the dogmas of these old masters, their religion and faith. But the importance of nineteenth century painting, (besides its technical and documentary merits) lies in the fact of having freed the artist from the seclusion of scholastic study, from the slavery and monotonous coldness of the classical plaster model and of ancient painting, of having led him in front of a living subject and out, in the open air, before the colored speaking nature.

noise and sound

Physically, sound is a rythmical, equal vibration through air; noise is a disordered sound, confuse and prolonged. Both expand by means of invisible waves. But modern technique has been able to photograph these waves so that now it is possible to distinguish the wave of a sweet sound from that of a deafening noise.

Why then, if this plastic reality exists and is scientifically proved, if it can be technically photographed, are not painters allowed to paint and interpret it? Carlo Carrà wrote a manifest on the abstract painting of noises and smells, Giacomo Balla and Depero painted many pictures inspired by sound and noise and by the reality, transfigured by waves, of noises and sounds.

onomatongue

Expression of abstract poetry, language of interpreting (not imitative) onomatopoeia. Language of the wind, of water, of plants, of animals, of flowers, of metals, of materials and machines.

abstract painting

The truth must be told. The first, in Italy, to speak of abstract painting were the futurists. And not only did they speak of it, but they also showed their first experiments. Carlo Carrà spoke about the painting of noises and smells — Giacomo Balla painted dozens of pictures representing exclusively abstract forms. This was in 1914-1915 in Rome. I remember a big abstract painting of his: «Optimism and Pessimism» — dark, greenish, black, spherical forms against pink and mauve forms, sharp and cool, gaily expressive.

To speak to-day of the painting of sounds seems to me obvious and understandable. A long time ago, on the third page of the «Corriere della Sera», a long study was published dealing with the photographic reality of sound waves and with the plastic existence of the phonic phenomenon in Space. The writer said that, with perfect technique, it had been possible to photograph the intricate mass of the waves produced in Space by an orchestra and to distinguish the vibrations produced by violins from those of drums, trumpets and so on. This is a positive assertion, practically proved by a scientist, by a technician and not by an artist or by a dreamer. Therefore, the painting of a sound emotion is explainable and justified. The common prejudice considering this an absurdity is a mistake, since this phenomenon is a pictorial and plastic reality. In a manifest published in Rome in 1915, the painter Giacomo Balla and the undersigned Fortunato Depero declared themselves abstractists and, indeed, they devoted themselves to the expression of pure color, limited within a drawing and within abstract forms and to the composition of plastic masses of unreal meaning and of transcendental, stylistic inspiration. They were purists not only within the sensitive limit, but also in the expressive and constructive sense.

Free colors — Free forms — Free stylization — Free materials

and plastic means. And this with one sole aim: to concrete works having a new taste and style, to reveal a new world.

A fine example of abstract painting is the picture by G. Balla entitled: *The awakening of Spring*. It is something like a chromatic eruption expressing and summing up the colored spreading of a mass of forms, of flames, of petals and pistils, of clouds and evanescent pollens, of chromatic perfumes, rendering perfectly the magic sensation of a pictorial awakening of the newly born season.

My first Roman exhibition consisted almost completely of abstract paintings. My abstract works, however, always referred to definite subjects, so that each had its definite, almost objective title: *» Fish », « The cock is crowing », « A grenade bursting »*. For arbitrage is one of the dangers of abstraction, being a trap one must be careful to avoid. Therefore, in order not to incur in this obvious calligraphic mistake and thus unconsciously annul the consistence of the discovery or diminish the value of creation, it is necessary always to keep in mind the starting point, the emotional origin, the object, the essence, the subject or the atmosphere which have caused this same emotion. For this emotion and internal or external phenomenon cannot be divided or removed from their provoking elements or from the atmosphere which contained them and in which they developed. For instance: lightning is an electric sound phenomenon taking place in the sky and the phonic fact is simultaneously heard and seen by the artist together with the luminous flash and the dark landscape of clouds and mountains.

The cockadoodledoo of the cock is heard together with its anatomic iridescent and feathery construction. The bursting of a grenade is conceived and immediately put together with its shells of solid bomb and its metallic splinters. We have, therefore, the flaming, abstract and impalpable forms depicting the speed, the rocket, the bursting, but we have also the real, palpable forms of splinters, of the ground, the house or the target that has been hit.

The so-called plastic equivalents, that is, the formal values of invisible forces, must be put together with material values, unifying themselves into a whole of demonstrative evidence.

Abstract painting is a concomitant expression, an enriching plastic language, a problem like the problem of the anatomy of perspective, of harmony, of symbolism, of portrait and of psychology.

parasite

A parasite is a man who is always sponging on someone. We call parasites those plants and animals who live at the expense of other living organisms. There are also many artists who live on other people's food and who sponge on other artists without



f. depero

myself and wife • (oil 1919) property mattioli collection • milan



clearness and will - (the hands of the artist)

acknowledging it and without declaring the real source and the honest derivation. They are not plagiarists and they are not dishonest: they are simply parasites.

passatist

It is an artist who diligently plagiarizes the art of the past with cold copies. It is he who believes only in the past, excluding a priori the possibility of evolution. It is the obstinate traditionalist who thinks he understands art because he is learned and has been educated to conventional, limited, old-fashioned tastes, acquired through wrong and trite schooling.

patience

To be able to wait for one's turn. To be able to await and understand the right moment for one's action. Do not begin your painting if the drawing is not perfectly done! Let it rest for weeks and months and then take it in hand again with a more mature mind. The right moment to finish it will come in due time! Have patience.

patrimony

Mr. X owns a large estate which is worth a patrimony. Mr. Y, the great manufacturer, has reached an enormous production and, in a few years, he has earned a patrimony. The history of Italy can be proud of so many artists that, together, they make up an insuperable artistic patrimony. Real works of art represent irrefutable values on the market; therefore, that artist who succeeds in producing real works of art constituting a patrimony can, with good reasons, feel happy and deservedly rich. It is so even if the cashier of a bank or the managing board of a great trust have not yet succeeded in considering a work of art as possessing money value.

centrifugal and centripetal perspective

It is a definition by Depero expressing two perspective orders contained in a dynamic painting. First: «centrifugal perspective» — a perspective, irradiating order, expanding lights, forces and objective and abstract forms exploding from the centre of the picture. Second: «centripetal perspective» — a perspective, concentrating order of lights, of forces and of objective and abstract forms, magnetic, grouped together and directed towards the centre of the painting, towards the fire of the plastically represented action or sensation, towards the essence of the subject.

internal and emotional perspective

It is that particular perspective through which an artist is able to see and draw his favourite subjects from a specific, interpreting and emotional point of view. To make larger or smaller, to overlook or neglect the whole or the details according to the attraction and interest the artist feels for them.

multiple perspective

A term expressing the simultaneous, co-ordinated use of various opposite perspectives: vertical, frontal, internal, external, luminous, emotional perspectives. Multiple perspective, if used with strict order and style, is a necessary key for an organic painting of dynamic conception.

plagiarist

He who plagiarizes and copies both from the art of the past and from that of to-day. He is a middling artist: dishonest if he trades his produce and loyal if he acknowledges his plagiarism and does not try to make money out of it. One must, however, distinguish between the frank artist who copies faithfully, as a hobby, a trade or a study and the cunning profiteer of other people's discoveries which he sells as his own after a few personal alterations.

plastic masses

Polimateric artistic expression in which the artist uses all kinds of materials: wood, metal, plaster, glass, cloth and so on, with the purpose of vivifying the contents and the plastic contrasts. We must here remember the plastic masses by Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, F. Depero, E. Prampolini and Archipenko.

plastic values

In every branch of science, of ideas and of matters there are values of first, second, third and lowest degree: from discoveries to the most conceited human stupidities; from the diamond to precious metals and down to the vilest matters. Thus, in art there are sublime values of conception, of drawing, of pictorial excellence and of genial, masterly relief. These are the values characterizing the real work of art and dividing it from a sham and common work lacking valuable and substantial contents and therefore lacking plastic values.

potato

It is cultivated particularly on the mountains. Both plant and tuber are called potato. When someone has absurd pretences, we say «he has potatoes in his head». «Potato wit» means very poor wit. But the potato was also a projectile widely used by the enemies of futurists and by protestants during futuristic evenings. Being short of ideas for a discussion and short of good will to grasp and understand the futuristic explanations, speeches, lectures, declamations, poems and ideas, they were amused and quite content to answer with potatoes, seasoned with insults and mockeries. Had they listened more carefully, had they criticized with more benevolence, their brain today would certainly have been richer and more alive and they would have developed a fine field of knowledge and of ideas which would have been very useful to their mental and cultural elevation. On the contrary, their brain has probably remained a barren field, lacking even those useful and precious tubers which they disdainfully wasted and threw on the stage, with stupid conceit, as a mark of contempt to new ideas and to newly flourishing Italian art.

radio lyrics

Poetical expressions written and conceived for radiotransmission and composed by Depero. The publisher Giuseppe Monreale published a volume of them in 1934 in Milan. These lyrics contain specific radio characteristics: they are synthetic, varied, suitable for declamation, amusing and unexpected, fit for the radio listener who may be in all kinds of different places — at home, at the hotel, on the deck of a steamer, in a drug store or in the street.

rationalism

It is a regenerator architectonic movement going back to the origin of architecture and to its pure, basic principles. Rationalists have brought back to light the functional purpose of architecture by by getting rid of all unnecessary encumbrances, of all dross and discordant additions, thus giving back to architecture light, usefulness and new modern splendor. The first and greatest exponents of rationalism were Sant'Elia and Le Corbusier.

shadows

Shading is a necessary element for the relief of volume. Shadow is a synonym of depth and darkness. A shadow is a black area — stretched out, lying down or broken — adhering to the background or ground on which the object or figure projecting it is

standing or walking. A shadow has a speaking individuality of its own. I have always been greatly interested in shadows: dividing them from their original figures, making them stand, giving them a body, as black figured walls and solid vivified blocks, as depths dug into space. I painted a picture entitled: «Town mechanized and geometrized by shadows» in which I depicted abysmal, deep shadows like ditches, having the profile of a lamp-post or of an anonymous nocturnal passer-by. I created a ballet for my plastic theatre entitled «The dance of shadows». These were not projected shadows, but really built ones, shaped and moving as definite, articulated ghosts. They were shadows of objects and of people — long and short — whole and broken — black, blue, red and violet — coming to life in an abstract atmosphere, rhythmically moving, getting together and apart, lying down and rising at the sound of syncopated music. Shadows are black blades cutting the bodies, mutilating them and dividing them into segments. They are the symbol and synthesis of nocturnal mysterious profiles. They are also flat pieces of sky on the ground, drawn by the fool of men and animals. A few years ago, I wrote and illustrated a short story bearing the title of «I and my shadow».

self-made

A self-made artist is an artist who follows his own conception of artistic representation, obeying to his calling with great will and constancy, listening to everybody and following no one, creating for himself a method of his own and finally revealing his own world.

sensibility

Particular mental and nervous quality enabling one to notice at once the slightest emotional details and, in art, to notice every shading, every mezzotint, all the secret cunning evading normal sensibility. To be sensitive means to possess high qualities of mind and spirit, a rare soul and a refined exceptional temperament. It is a mark distinguishing a talented, superior person.

simultaneousness

Simultaneous impressions are various impressions which one has at the same time. In cubist and futurist painting, for instance, we draw half a face seen from the front and the other half in profile, the two halves being joined together; we draw, simultaneously, the external and the internal part of a room or of a concrete body: a distant and near figure; a real and unreal image.

These images are drawn and painted one within the other, simultaneously joined, cast together, as if they belonged to a single body.

to sketch

To a painter, to sketch means to trace the chief lines and masses of a drawing or painting. The importance of sketching is obvious, since from it depends the general setting of the subject and of the composition. The skill of the artist is manifest in the character, balance and rhythm of the sketch. To jot down a rough sketch is quite easy, but to sketch with style is difficult. Too many artists however content themselves with sketches and even at exhibitions one finds more sketches than real works.

skill

That of being skilful in drawing, painting and moulding is, in my opinion, a great virtue. The hand of the artist must be the most attentive and the most perfect of instruments. One may have a superior brain, but if one's hand does not co-operate adequately, the effort will be useless and negative. There exist, of course, also skilful hands owned by dull, short-sighted brains; in this case their skill becomes useless and barren. The perfect ideal is, therefore, a skilful hand coupled with an efficient, clear brain.

and so i paint you

Are your eyes blue?

Well, they are two pieces of sky.

Is your nose as tender and velvety as a flower?

Well, to my eyes and to my touch, it sheds its petals as a delicate tulip.

Is your cheek as cool as soft grass?

Well, let your flesh be green grass.

Does the sun on your forehead burn hot and shining?

Well, let yellow and red pistils grow and bloom as irradiating thorns and adorn you with a happy crown of splendour.

Your hair in the wind is flowing and aerial?

Let then waves of cobalt, of water, of air, let tawny clouds and clouds of ebony and gold lull themselves in the small, gentle vales of your fluid hair.

Do your teeth shine snow-white?

Let them be a key-board of melodious geometry.

Is your voice rich and musical?

Let it spread and surround you as a spiral and a scarf of transparent gauze. Let your dry, long, serpentine, warm neck thin down

to a light stem, fragile to the wind and to touch, let it bear elastically the floreal bunch of your scented multicolored portrait. Let me sing praises to the calix of your youth. The red carnations of your lips are murderous daggers — but I am not afraid of them — I kiss you and bite among shivers of sharp blades — and so I paint you. Let people call me as they like: mad — surrealist — decorative — armetric — abstractist. I don't care. So I feel you and so I paint you: the living image of your fascinating qualities.

solidification

To make hard, solid or definite an element, a form, a figure normally appearing fluid, aerial, transparent. The principle of the solidification of lights, of transparencies, of the pictorial and plastic values of impressions is the fundamental basis of that plastic dynamism begun by U. Boccioni and concreted in the classic sense by Depero.

spacial

We say «spacial» character of a painting or «spacial» interpretation of a given dynamic subject when we wish to indicate the power of expansion which the painter has succeeded in setting pictorially and plastically free from the interpreted subject. We call also «spacial» qualities the expressive and stylistic qualities, which the painter has succeeded in making outstanding, regarding the connections between the central subject and its surroundings.

speed

Nature has two clearly contrasting aspects: one is still, inert, motionless, the other is alive, changeable and animated by motion and speed. In the past, painters considered the former of these two aspects, whilst many artists of this century consider the latter, that is, the dynamic aspect of nature and of modern reality, caused by its variety and speed.

to stylize

To draw the figure of an object, of a flower, of a person, not in a carefully objective sense, but in a stronger sense — revealed by lines, color, form and expression — following a personal order of ideas and taste.

surrealism

That is: beyond reality; when an object, a plant, an animal or human figure assume, thanks to special effects of light, unusual positions unexpected clothing, unreal, magic and fantastic aspects which are not found in normal life and which a normal eye is not able to see. Surrealist painters, with their far-seeing eye, sharp intuition and free fancy, are inspired by these aspects of interpreted nature.

physical transcendentalism

Rome - 1915. *Discussion with Umberto Boccioni on mobile painting.*

Quartiere Prati, sunny and new. Blocks of comfortable, elegant buildings. High terraces with plenty of air. Whiteness of clean linen flapping in the wind. Avenues generously offering light, trees, room, wide pavements and golden wines. I lived in Cola di Rienzo, Crescenzo and Germano Streets, transversal and parallel — all equally comfortable, brimming with life, with colors and cool breezes. In Cola di Rienzo Street, I had a small room. It was a modest place having the functions of bed-room, work-room and kitchen. An omnibus room: piles of paintings, card-board machinery, plans of daring mobile plastic inventions. From the ceiling hung polychrome sheets of wordfree tables and of poems for placards. It was a room looking like the abode of a Chinese gipsy, of an abstract painter and of a designer of infernal machines. To this workshop-room came several important personages, journalists, artists, admirers and unbelievers.

On a Spring afternoon of the year 1915, Marinetti and Umberto Boccioni knocked at the door. This was the first time I shook hands with the creator of plastic dynamism. Marinetti explained to him my freeword tables and my abstract poems dangling from the ceiling and written on large sheets with a brush and colored inks. He read a few pieces of them with great enthusiasm. Then, on my part, I recited a few more. At the end, however, Boccioni interrupted angrily my reading. He said, in a loud voice, that he believed I was, first of all, a painter and a plastic and that he wished to examine my paintings. I dared not reply then and there, but later told my distinguished guests that both of them were right, since I sincerely felt both painter and poet. Then, Boccioni's nose, eyes and forefinger pointed at an ink drawing lying on the table which was marked with the title «Plan of three-cycle plastic». Boccioni frowned and did not say a word. Shortly afterwards, we coldly said good-bye.

Several days went by before I met him again. But there we were together again, along the green avenues of the Tiber. Bridges of

sun — castles of sky — walks of gold — and ardent emotions in our hearts and eyes.

He referred to my drawing and destroyed me with his reasonings, blaming my exaggerated audacity and my insolent impudence in treating art with a brutal, machinistic sense. At first, I was struck dumb, then I replied with friendly and timid frankness that it had been he who had taught me artistic courage of all kinds and I explained my conviction that in art there can be no limit of expression and therefore no limit to the means and matters necessary for creation. He himself had been the ideator and the defender of the free simultaneous use, in work of art, of any matter whatever, be it iron, glass, or cloth. I had gone farther than he, for I declared that not only such matters would have enriched a work of art, but that also mechanical, liquid and luminous means would have added to it a powerfully new element: «*motion*» and the magic sense of transformation.

Boccioni listened to me with interest, acknowledged my intentions and so we both agreed to confirm the futuristic principles, according to which the limits, the setting, the style and the means for artistic creation and composition are at the boundless disposal of every single talent: the important thing is to reach the solution of the problem and the concrete, obvious conclusion.

Mechanical means in a work of art will set moving and vibrating with a new life all pictorial, plastic, decorative or advertising elements. It will not be painting — it will not be sculpture — it doesn't matter: it will be a work of genial creation. I am certain that Leonardo Da Vinci who was planning war and flying machines and trying to solve problems of hydraulics while he decorated ceilings and painted pictures and frescos, would agree with me if he were here to-day. I am certain that he would continue his painting by creating artistic, sound and luminous plastic masses, and using all the technical and scientific wonders of this century. Boccioni listened to me with greater and greater attention; then he embraced me and left for Milan. This was our first and last conversation. A few days later, the painter Giacomo Balla received the following letter: «My dear Balla — we are happy to let you know that we have agreed to put the name of Depero among those forming the group of futurist painters and sculptors. We are certain that this will please you — always discovering and encouraging young talent with great enthusiasm and self-denial — and that it will help Depero to continue his work with more and more courage».

Signed: Umberto Boccioni - F. T. Marinetti - Carlo Carrà - Luigi Russolo.

(At that time, the Futuristic Movement consisted of very few artists — of very few real painters — sculptors — poets and musicians).



magic flora and fauna - (oil 1920) property private collection - milan

f. depero



f. depero

floral automatons - (oil 1922) property provincial board of milan

transcendental and transcendentalism

To transcend, to go beyond, to surpass the limits, to exceed, to see what is new and as yet untested. To transfigure the known reality by taking it into a world of dream and semi-abstraction. To give lights and forms of emotional drama to transfigured nature. It is through plastic transcendentalism that the talent and the creative faculties of the artist are revealed.

transfiguration

To take a figure and transform it into another. To change, in part or completely, the appearance of an object or figure. To give human aspect to an animal, animal aspect to a person, the aspect of an object to an animated figure and a living aspect to an inert object.

the twentieth century

In Italy, under the banner of «the twentieth century» there gathered at first a group of modern artists, having, however, more or less neo-classic intentions. Artists of different character and lacking in a particular purpose. It was an artistic circle, more like a family than a movement. Now I take the liberty of widening this circle and of extending the meaning of «twentieth century artist» to those artists and artistic life which began with postimpressionism, continued with cubism and dynamism and was developed through the surrealist and abstract metaphysics of to-day. (I mean those artists who have worked and produced something new within the first half of this century).

But events are pressing closely. The human dramas of evolution and of fatality are unforgiving. The horizon becomes red-hot. Wars and revolutions flare up: in the battle-fields, in the streets of the town, in the dockyards and factories, in the pages of literature and, most of all, in the human brain.

Rivalries are burning. New opinions and new aspirations come to the surface. Discoveries invade every field. This fever is contagious; generations change and fight one another. Children debate with their fathers and disavow them. The new life claims its due. The traditionalist, the man who created for himself a judgement, a way of living and of thinking, a patriarchal style of his own, is now fighting with all his strength for the defence of his conquests. He struggles to protect his own patrimony and feels that new times, new buds sprouting everywhere and evolution slowly and inexorably advancing in every field are beginning to make the ground crumble from under his feet.

The light of the poetic oil-lamp which once trembled in the hands of grandfather has gone out. A cold automatic button has switched on the white electric light. Electric locomotives advance on parallel rails — all the new means of transport have accelerated humanity which is getting dynamic in its customs and passions, in esthetics in style and taste, in its method and conscience.

The future is dazzling. To go back to the past means sadness and melancholy renunciation. But it could mean rest, it should, indeed be a rest allowing thought and meditation. Pause of the present and bond between the past and the future. The past, with its culture and tradition teaches us that just as it cannot alarm and stop us, so the future must not frighten but only incite us to greater things. One must not be afraid of new truths — one must face and subdue them in order to attain those new conquests which God, the supreme owner of past and future, has sent us. The painter of to-day should open his eyes and his divining instinct should master the new lights foretelling the future. It is God who has given us electricity and machines as also all the magic matters and laws of the miracles of to-day: therefore, we must not accept them with contempt, but welcome them with love, with religion, for a good purpose — the purpose of inspiration, of character and of style. I was perhaps the first to speak of plastic steel style. Do not be afraid of it — do not see in it the danger of mechanical devilish things — in it you will also find the splendour of the pupil, the tender splendour of buds, the crystal splendour of the delicate lace of a snow-flake, of a molecule, of an atom.

The atomic discovery terrifies all fearful humanity. But it enlightens future wisdom and science. Also transcendental artistic movements alarm timorous people, but they encourage and enlighten discoverers, aerodynamics and surrealists: the genial scholars of the scientific and spiritual aspects of enchantment and of supernatural things. The spirit of matter — the spirit of an object. The spirit and action of man. The magic contents of a flower and of an instrument. The modern worshipper, twentieth century artist has discovered the internal perspective of emotion, the moving formula of internal reality. The object and the figure drawn and painted with the breath and the hand of the artist who feels moved and stirred in fixing on canvas the blaze of a running horse, of a racing cyclist, of the wind whirling the landscape, have the power of forming a plastic drama which cannot leave us unmoved. For subjective variety, personal interpreting intensity, the revelation of the inmost language of things are the secrets of the genial artist. In this internal love, in this plastic will, in this magic super-human expression are the values of the art of to-day.

And indeed, the heroism of the twentieth century artist lies in these tasks, studies, toils, in this analysis, synthesis, dissolving and re-composing, in this work of plastic and poetic laboratory.

trees

When I was eighteen, I drew accurate pen and pencil studies of trees. Trunks with knots and bark analysed with minute lines and delicate shading; barren winter branches and leafy spring ones, slender and bulky trees. Dark, bony branchings in the fog and lighted ghosts laden with snowy enchantment. In 1935, I wrote a few poems in blank verse, inspired by trees: «The Mugus — eyebrow of the summit... «The Pine-tree — belfry of the cold and hood of the forest... «A surviving trunk — mained symbol of the wreck... «The Willow — with its branches saying yes and no according to the wind... «The Linden — the world hanging from its powerful legs, swelling with centuries... and «The human plant — when it sheds its leaves and its trunk and bark crash down, it sets out along the avenues of time and space to enrich the forest of after life...

I consider a work of art as a plant: with firm roots in the ground, straight as a trunk, with well spread values, blooming with enchanting colors, abounding in rich volumes of outstanding relief, composed as a magic tree grown from the brain of the artist.

understanding

To understand is easy and is also difficult. In order to understand Japanese, one must know Japanese. In order to understand English, one must know English. And not only the language of English people, but also their mentality and their customs. It is the same in art: one must have some culture and know its language, its origin and its aims. The understanding and appreciation of art is proportional to the erudition of the individual, to his degree of artistic intelligence, to his amount of love and passion for it. Some wrote big volumes on art and made it almost impenetrable, so that the reader almost gave it up, for he was made to feel that it was a subject regarding only a few chosen ones. On the contrary, it is necessary to simplify and facilitate understanding. Too many critics debated on the word «art» and used hermetic — obscure — metaphysical — philosophical terms, so that art looked like a deep mystery, an incomprehensible expression.

This is a mistake, a great mistake. Let artists write: they who are the direct creators of art and the simplest and sincerest men on earth will lead people to the understanding of their works, so that everyone will learn the secret of art and enjoy it in its elementary principles and fundamentals. If one has a cultivated mind and a sensitive soul enabling him to appreciate the values of color, of rhythm, of light, of drawing, of form and of fancy contained in the universe — the beauty of a flower — the plastic of an animal — the surprising transparency of a rocky, floreal or water landscape —

there is no reason why he should not admire, discover, enjoy and understand the values contained in a work of art. And this, even if the work of art does not contain imitative values of nature, but interpreting and creating values.

Even a work of art may have its own chromatic and plastic charms, its own transparencies and typical figurative surprises.

words in liberty

After blank verse, F. T. Marinetti advanced in the poetic field with the «words in liberty». It is a form of poetry open to all possibilities: from typographic to imaginative ones, enlivened by onomatopoeia and imitative noises. Its most severe criticism could be found in its definition: «words in liberty», since poetry and lyric are the expression of a strict choice of conceptions and not of words, of organic hermetic and anti-hermetic lyrical contents.

wind

Dance of the wind. At the «Convegno» of Milan in 1936, a good dancer, among blue veils and magic lights, interpreted with success a lyric of Depero. The lyric was recited by Depero himself, in the shadows behind the side-scenes, while the dancer Censi interpreted it with original mimicry.

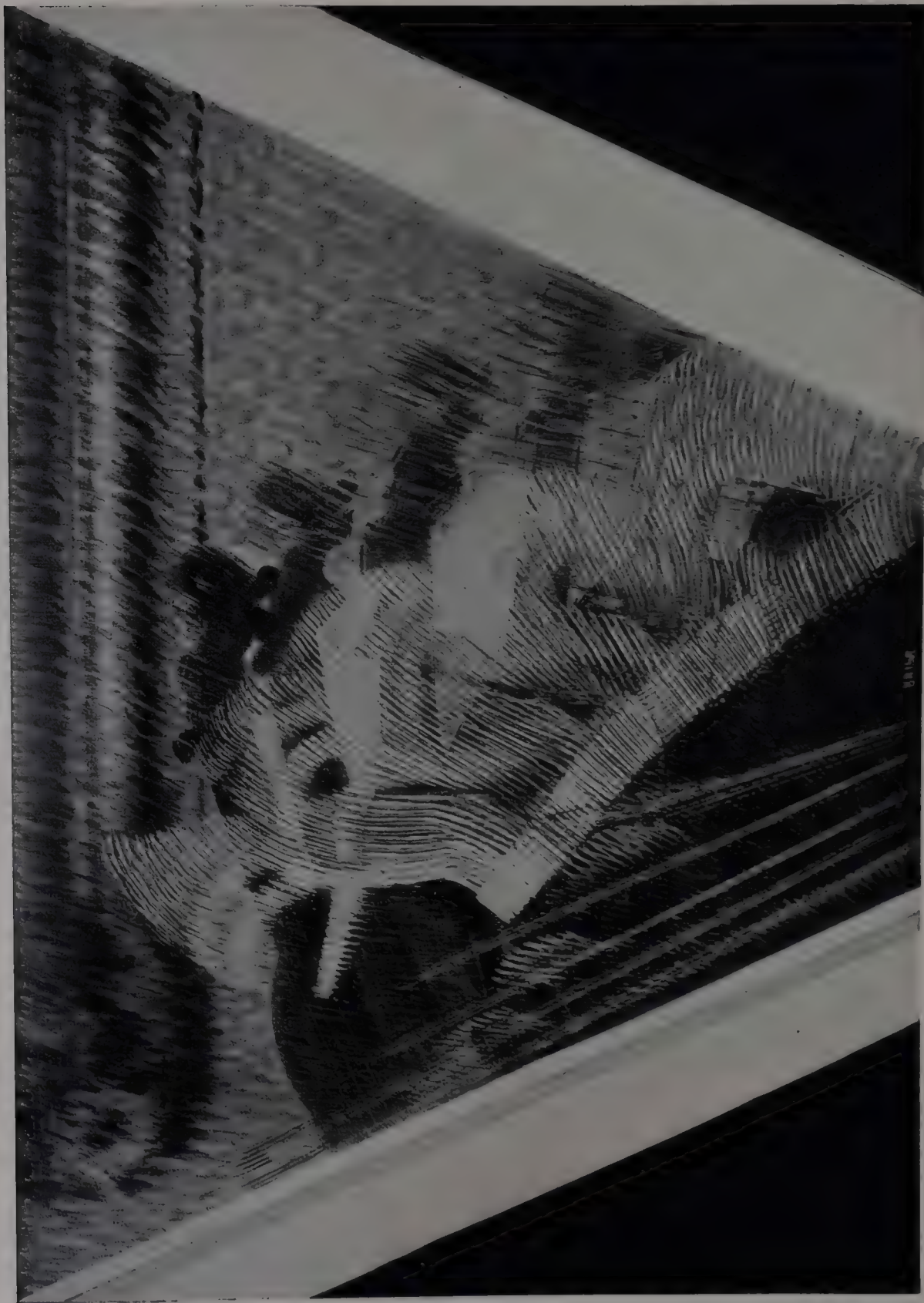
Gust of wind is a small oil painting by Depero, of 1947. In it, a feminine figure is whirled by the wind among clothes and spires of sky, moulded within an aerial, vitreous involucre of volumes.

decorative art

«Do not accuse us of exaggerating if we say that two or three bold and wilful artists like Depero would be more than enough to renew our decorative art and to better the credit of our country».

CARLO CARRÀ

Mario Sironi is an artist who knows what he is about and has succeeded in creating a style and character of his own and a personal plastic power. From time to time, he also writes and I like to read him. I quote here a sentence which I found in one of his articles, a few years ago: «A good decorator is better than a thousand picture makers». I quite agree with him. The first and foremost aim of art was, is, and probably will be a wisely decorative one. The painter must complete the work of the architect with rhythm, color, fancy and high conception. He who cries: «painting, painting», that is, «pure painting alone» is a man who understands and accepts only the tonal part of this art, ignoring and under-valuing all the rest. For the purists and picture-makers, Raffaello's large tapestries and Dutch tapestries of very high value, do not exist. The great byzan-



the violinist's hands - oil by giacomo balla



elasticity - (racing horse) oil by umberto boccioni



head + house + light - (plastic mass) sculpture by umberto boccioni



hieroglyph of a parisian tabarin - oil by gino severini

tine, romanic and greek mosaics do not exist. Michelangelo's gigantic frescos do not exist. All the wonderful plastic and pictorial Egyptian decorative art does not exist. Indian art, representing the highest and most fantastic mystical decorative dream, does not exist. The picture-maker is unable to conceive and plan rich theatrical scenes, he is unable to compose the rich background or the complicated harmonic figuration of a tapestry and of a sacred or prophane stained glass; he is unable to evade from his frame of 30 cm. x 40, from his mentality of 30 cm. x 40, from his capacity contained in a space of 30 cm. x 40. One can be decoratively insignificant — one can be decoratively dull — one can be decoratively no better than a white-washer — but one can also be architectonically and powerfully decorative as Tintoretto or Carpaccio, and even decorative in the most dramatic and apocalyptic sense as Greco or Michelangelo.

Decorative art, in its best and complete meaning, is the type of art exacting character and style at the uttermost. In the drawing, in color, in form, in every detail and in the masses, from the flower to the cloud, from landscape to figure, from architectures to symbols, from gay subjects to dramatic ones, everywhere, every element is rythmically composed and stylized. A decorative work is musically and architectonically conceived and concreted. Through decorative art the artist expresses a whole world: he creates stylistically and reveals his best technical skill, he faces bravely large areas and difficult audacious subjects. In the decorative art of frescos, mosaics, tapestries or sculptures, the artist is without a model and must work only with his talent, his knowledge and skill, drawing from his inmost world and from all his expressive and technical possibilities. He must face the theme of composing and creating. In our churches in our basilicas, in our historical palaces, there are imposing works of decorative art.

During the last twenty years many gigantic international and national exhibitions have presented works of wall decoration — pictorial, plastic, luminous and polymateric, ideated and concreted by the greatest artists of every nation — thus emulating the great masters of the past.

I hope with this to have made understand and respect the true and right meaning of the word « decoration ».

experimental and revolutionary art

This art was born during the last decades and it is probably the fruit of these experimental times. Never, as in this century, has there been so much human insatisfaction. It is an explorative longing which began with theories and then became action, which was first a mere method of study, then a fever of laboratories and factories

and which to-day reaches the collective drama of ideas, a drama of nations and of races. Could art remain absent? Was it possible for artists not to notice all the wonders that daily came to life? Only dull, short-sighted or stubbornly traditional artists could hold on to their habitual convictions and continue their mechanical plagiaristic repetition, more or less honest and useful. You know the type: old, bearded traditionalists, wise professors full of dignity.... My kindest regards to them.

Near the professor quickly passed the young man — thin and bony — a bit of a scamp and of an artist — restless. He was endowed with qualities — animated by a mysterious longing of inventing a drawing, of revealing a picture as yet unseen, of painting a corner which the professor had never shown him and of interpreting it in an unusual manner. We can find several of these young men to-day. They are odd and misunderstood — often they are lonely. At school and at home they are depreciated, but they have temperament and their eyes are strangely bright. But near these precocious young men, there are also older artists who are restless and unsatisfied and who wish to destroy in the evening the picture they have painted during the day. They feel like breaking the subject, putting in a few violent, illogic additions, discovering foreshortenings and unexpected surprises. It is so that experimental fever was born and that pictorial experiments came to be consolidated by revealing ideas and by exciting discussions and polemics. In the right atmosphere, the new current sprang up and experimental art and revolutionary ideologies developed. It is the primitive art of our future, apparently without organic aims, but with ideologically justified aims, instinctively wanted by the precocious youth, by the misunderstood and insatiable artist, and by Time, the first and foremost judge of every evolution.

To-day, many of those unknown and lonely young men, many of those independent, unsatisfiable artists who lost the appreciation and consideration of important magnates through their eagerness for originality and discovery, have been rewarded by Time, the great judge. Their names shine on the high-road and are the milestones of the history of Modern Art. And now only some meagre and gossipy chroniclers, or perhaps some miserable, long-haired, unsuccessful artists can still croak their contempt for the nobility of these acknowledgements. To this golden period of experimental and revolutionary beginning belong the post-impressionists, the dynamics, the metaphysics and the rationalists and abstractists. They revealed theories, studies, formulas, laws and works of complete value, contents, and artistic meaning which stand out in world culture and in the best galleries and collections.

There would be much more to say on the experimental and revolutionary art of our times. Methodically and patiently we shall say it.

professional art

The art of the honest professional man is a noble trade. To be able to paint a portrait with a good likeness, to be able to paint a good nude, to be able to depict a fine landscape with the right perspective rules—that is: perspective of drawing and of tonal distances, wise distancing of the single planes, faithful volumetric sense in the painting of hills, houses, mountains, clouds and fields and in the foreshortenings of streets, suggestive relief to figures and objects, and this without stylistic pretence, without creative attempts — requires praiseworthy qualities. These paintings represent works of serene judgement and professional skill and, if they are not works of art, they are, nevertheless, works of laudable intentions made by good scholars of rules, of raw material and of artistic morals. This is what I mean by professional art, valuable and useful for the first steps on the way of Art, with a capital A.

pure art

Much has been said about pure and impure art. As always, there is a good and a bad side of things. So every theory, every opinion, every current and every conception has its advantages and disadvantages. Why did the purist movement break out? For a very simple reason: because too many impurities tarnished art. Manierism, symbolism, predominant psychology, compulsory misleading, plagiarism and dilettantism, rashness, childishness, ignorance and deceit. Therefore one rightly cried: «art for art's sake! — color for color's sake, free form!» That is: first of all sensibility, then pure rhythm and tone, subjective interpretation, mood and abstraction.

It was a real awakening an anti-bourgeois and anti-static reaction, a necessary amendment towards the right way. It was fatal, however, that misunderstandings should crop up through profeteers and cheaters, foolish and dishonest people. Many hurried up to become abstractists, amateur futurists sprouted everywhere, the artistic world was swarming with people without technical basis, without principles of conscience, of trade, of culture and calling who gave themselves to the most impudent artistic dilettantism, making fools both of the public and of the critics, adding to the confusion, stealing and plagiarizing in the worst sense of the word.

Beware of purists and of pseudo-avanguarde painters! Many are talented and in good faith, but many are impure in their works and actions.

To purists I prefer those artists who have their own clear ideological programme, even if they are compromised by applied tasks — decorative, sporting, historical, sacred or prophane, static or dynamic, physical or metaphysical — but who can prove they know what

they want and are able to reach their noble aims. Artists who can show they have a head on their shoulders and a skilful hand, a brain — simple or complicated, but always clear and firm, who can show they have a conscience and a sure step, a frank and generous mentality and speech, a good health and a heart and warm genuine blood in their veins, undiluted and unpoisoned.

building an enchanted garden

a) sergio paulovic diaghilew

Russian music critic and choreographer. (Novgorod 1872 - Venice 1929) He was the critic of the periodical «Les Nouvelles» and began in 1899 the periodical «The World of Art» which was supported by Nicholas II and lasted till 1905. In 1907 he organized in Paris concerts of Russian music and in 1908 brought to the Opera House the «Boris Godunov» by Mussorgski with the bass Scialapin and the choir of the Imperial of Petersburg. He is particularly well-known as the divulger of the «Russian Ballets» a style of ballet which met with the approval of the whole world.

(Modern Italian Encyclopaedia - Publishers: Sonzogno - Milan)

b) the trousers are short and the tails fit me like a glove

Rome - 1916. Diaghilew's secretary during his stay in Rome was Michael Semenoff. He was once a publisher and studied at the University of Berlin; he loved and still loves Italy and likes to associate with men of letters and artists. He sang the praises of wine, art and life with a typically Russian style. A cultured man, he is desperately in love with the sea, especially that of Capri and Amalfi that are his world of joy and of fishing. And who does not know his hieratic beard, his crystal blue eyes, his clear, good-natured, sharp and ironical smile and that typical nose of his, small and flat like that of a mujik? Tall, now a little bent, but still healthy and a good walker, quick and gay. I say, Semenoff! I say Michael! Do tell us one of your delightful stories, you who are such a fresh and expressive story-teller. You know, those colored, paradoxical, primitive stories, full of meaning and of symbols, ingenuous and surprising!

I am in the studio of Giacomo Balla, that is, within a kaleidoscope used as a dwelling. Geometrical refractions of forms and colors are everywhere. Balla and Semenoff introduce me to the famous Russian stage-manager Serge Diaghilew who is in Rome to organize an exceptional performance of «Russian Ballets» at the Costanzi Theatre. But, first of all, he will give a concert played by Igor Strawinsky at the Grand Hotel. Only people who have received an invitation are admitted. I get one, but am rather embarrassed for I have no evening clothes. After a long search I finally find a friend who gives me a pair of trousers which I gratefully accept even though one



f. depero

seamstress (oil 1920)



psychological portrait of the airman f. azari (oil 1922)

f. depero

leg is shorter than the other. Another friend finds a coat at the bottom of an old trunk: it is a tail coat, and, Heaven be praised, it fits me like a glove. Dressed up in this way, I make my appearance in the great hall dazzling with lights, ladies and great Italian and foreign celebrities. I see the great sculptor Rodin from Paris, Umberto Boccioni from Milan, Marinetti, Leon Bakst — the magician of scenography — Mestrovic, Picasso and Jean Cocteau, Casella, Malipiero, Respighi and many many others.

Strawinsky wears gold rimmed spectacles fastened with a thick string; his long nose hangs on the key-board which he beats, torments and caresses, violently bringing it to life with an inspired touch. His music is constructive, almost metallic, in blocks and waves, but also popular, gaily festive, charming the soul and the attention of the listener.

I make the most of the opportunity and talk with critics, make the acquaintance of artists, important personages and lovely ladies and enjoy a delicious meal consisting of sandwiches and sweets, of precious wines, rare liquors and unknown delikatessen. Wherever Russian people are, you will always find, besides art and beautiful women, magnificent food: refined dishes and candies, wodka and champagne, caviar and happy toasts. When one is with them one lives in an atmosphere exalting society life, the joy of living and passion for art. This, of course is in 1916, among aristocratic Russians, refugees and artists. They find themselves in a mood of orgiastic and nostalgic abandon. Princesses open restaurants and inns and suddenly become waitresses, cooks and good servant-girls. They serve and sing, they drink and dance. They open night clubs brightly decorated by original painters; they promote artistic meetings and arrange Russian huts and dance-halls.

On the stage we have Cossak choirs, merry balalaikas, happy harmonicas, fairy-like scenes, golden domes, moonlit snow, sledges and country rites of mujiks. The mimic impetuosity and the parodistic novelties are amusing and successful.

But one genial stage-manager stands out above all others. He has gathered all the best of Russian art: scenographers, dancers and musicians. Diaghilew is not like other stage-managers specialized in Russian performances: with greater courage and a wider mind, he opens his work to international art and wants the co-operation of French painters and poets, of Spanish musicians and scenographers, of Italian writers and artists. He picks out the best of ancient and modern art, even of the boldest avanguard.

c) i'm in the money!

Now Diaghilew is in Italy, looking for new artists and for choreographic subjects which he wishes to add to his rich theatrical patrimony. Ancient music interests him, Italian masks exalt him and he

finds useful elements in the futuristic movement. He chooses music by Scarlatti and Respighi and inserts the futuristic noisetuners of Russolo to the musical poems of Strawinsky. He orders abstract scenes to the painter Giacomo Balla and to Pablo Picasso and lastly he comes to my small studio in Quartiere Prati together with the choreographer and dancing master Leonida Massine.

My studio is also my bedroom and Rosetta's kitchen. Paintings and canvasses encumber every corner and Diaghilew wants to look at them, one by one. Like the generous patron of art that he is, he immediately buys a few canvasses and several drawings and is then attracted by a small cardboard plastic representing a bunch of flowers.

d) leaves five metres long - corollas having a diameter of two metres - polychrome cuirasses

Floreal architecture has always interested me. Not flowers seen as chromatic spots, as perfumed and velvety masses and details, as elements of soft tactile grace, having a mystical and feminine charm; not the flower in its pictorial and poetical already known aspects, since these have been discovered and solved in every language and by brushes and pens of all times (see under the heading: Flowers), but the flower studied and dissected in its structure: canals, stems, corollas, sections, pistils, points, indentings, spirals and multiform gearings.

In order to express these constructive internal and external aspects, I use cardboard of various thickness and pliability, for this material allows me to compose schematic invented flowers better than color and plastic materials. Bent cardboard, clipped and inserted, forming cones, cylinders, slices. Sharp carnations, bell-flowers with indented edges, pointed leaves in bunches and couples, florescences of discs and triangles, thorny bushes of forked branches, a crystal-like and metallic fairy flora.

One of these sketches is of particular interest to my illustrious guests. It is lying on the night-table in an almost unreachable corner, for the room is crowded with paintings and cardboard. I must slip under the bed, creep like a cat (my guests are amused) and pick up the strange floreal bunch which I hand to Mr. Diaghilew. He examines it and then invites me to lunch at the «Concordia» Restaurant in Via della Croce. At the end of the meal, Diaghilew makes me the proposal of completing the sketch for stage use and of preparing an estimated account for its realization in large proportions. Contract, money, good cigars, interviews. Already, Italian and Paris newspapers announce the theatrical novelty. ...Depero, the young futurist, will set for the stage the «Song of the Nightingale» by Igor Strawinsky with plastic costumes and scenes... ...The Russian musician, called by wire from Switzerland, is satisfied, and Massine, the choreographer is enthusiastic...

I rent a large studio in Viale Giulio Cesare and set to the gigantic realization of this artificial garden: leaves five metres long, bell-flowers having a diameter of two metres, corollas with wide mouths. The necessary study regarding the insertions, the way of supporting, of demounting and of transporting these huge creations is not simple. The work is hard but gets on very well and my large room is all shining with this immense plastic vegetation. As my task gets on, I continually meet new problems which must be solved, problems regarding form, style and the material.

Now everything is almost ready, but Diaghilew wants some sketches of costumes suitable to the scenes. I must therefore invent polychrome cuirasses, geometrical Chinese masks (the ballet is inspired by a Chinese legend), rigidly stylized and violently colored costumes. The human figure disappears under the volume, the wings and the shields. Even the hands are square, the arms cylindrical and the heads in compartments. They are mobile involucres which the genial mimic Massine wears and experiments in front of a large mirror, thus obtaining surprise effects of great efficacy. Cardboard, wire, pasted linen, enamels, wings, convex and concave forms of every color. The difficulties are many but they shall be overcome. The dress-maker is busy, her girls are exhausted and I give orders and watch over everything, I distribute leaves, arms, masks and umbrellas. Time is short, the day for delivery is nearing and I cannot possibly finish my work.

Diaghilew must leave: his company must go to London and then to Spain. My plan must be put off. All my great hopes vanish one by one. Diaghilew's absence is prolonged and the owner of my studio is an English Cerbero, bespectacled, impatient and mistrustful. She orders the sequestration of all the material and from its sale gets her rent in arrears. And I am left with my nose sticking to the panes of the big window, with a great sadness in my heart and large plastic tears in my eyes...

The bright garden built with ardent inventive poetry and toil has now become a heap of cardboard, of contorted wires and of pressed canvases, trampled by barbarian hands and feet. All is wrecked, including the generosity of the Russian stage-manager who is now dead with his immense choreographic effort and his infinite theatrical victories and conquests. Only the remembrance remains, the significative experiment, the aspiration to a theatrical expression yet to come which through courage and talent could again come to life.

character

In order to paint, to draw and to mould with character and style, one must, first of all, have a character and a style in one's mind and soul. One must have attained a mental maturity, a clear sensi-

bility, a pure conscience and will: virtues which are above normality and which distinguish and mark the real talented artist, setting him far above amateur professionals and easel picture-makers.

When the artist takes his beloved subject and gives to it all his care, marks it with his specific style, enlivens it with his own sentimental or psychological qualities, clothes it with his own temperament and cultivates it as if it were his own child and by degrees creates a pondered work of art bearing the mark of his own character and thus becoming original, unmistakable and personal, that artist possesses what I call character.

conversations

a) three proud and bold girls

They come in, arm in arm, at one of my Personal Shows of the year 1946. They look like students, proud and bold. They cast a glance at my paintings, look at one another and then burst into laughter. Some visitors turn round and look at them with surprise. I also am attracted by them. As they continue their round in the rooms I realize that the more they see, the less they understand. Their laughter and rude criticism get louder. I pretend to be a visitor myself, get near them and overhear what they say. By now their laughter is decidedly noisy and their expressions are decidedly rude. Therefore I think the time has come to put in a word and I ask them suddenly:

«Why are you laughing, girls? Have you never before visited a Show of Avanguard Art? I should like to know the reasons of this mirth of yours which I find excessive and out of place». They answer:

«But we understand nothing of this kind of painting and these anti-esthetic and anti-human forms make us laugh. Are we not allowed to enjoy ourselves and to express our opinions as we please? Isn't this a public place? We are not offending anyone and then, for us, art is quite a different thing!»

And they turn round and begin to walk away, but I call them back. «Excuse me, girls, since you intend to defend your behaviour and to give reasons for it, let me do the same and, considering you are all very pretty, I will do it all the more willingly. No, I am not the artist, but I have to watch over the show and I am interested in Avanguard Art. To begin with, I will ask you whether among these 51 works you haven't found a single one to your liking. For instance, what do you think of these two pencil drawings of the head of an old man, done with skill, accurate technique and strong human feeling?

— «Oh, yes, we like these and we can understand them». (By this time, their laughter had calmed down).

— « Oh, good. Then you have found something. And what about this large flower pot and this smaller one? You see, they are not chrysanthemums, they are not roses or carnations, in short, they are not the flowers which have been painted for centuries by thousands of painters. Don't you think they have been rendered with clearness of shading, with attentive drawing and relief of form? They are wild mountain flowers and plants stylized with originality and character ».

— « Oh, yes — they all answered together — we like these for their clearness and harmony and then we can understand that flowers and plants have such a variety of shape and colors that even these unusual and invented ones can be accepted ».

— « There, you see now, that makes four subjects you have liked! Why then did you behave in such an impulsive, aggressive and prejudiced fashion? Have patience, try your best to read in these apparently hermetic canvases. Ask for explanations, kindly and politely, and little by little you will understand.. I am here for this sole purpose. You must know that the author is a serious and able artist, healthy of mind and of body. This is his 82nd Show and he is internationally well-known. Before expressing your opinion of him in such a rash fashion, make use of your attention and of your brain even if all his work does not seem to you quite understandable. Don't do as many newspaper critics who come in, glance around, think that a minute has been sufficient to understand everything and then write: « The usual futurism — we are already acquainted with these odd decorations, with these panels of the Lenci type — Futurism does not even deserve to be called a theory — these are expressions which do not go beyond and so on ».

« Are you Slade students? »

« Yes, we are ».

« I had thought as much and I am glad. We can better understand each other, since you also study the same subject. So you like these drawings and these two floreal paintings and you are surprised at the artist for stylizing and schematizing down to the utmost conclusions of synthesis and of instinctive and abstract transcendence. His skill, his originality, his constancy (for you should have heard of his past activity: scenography - tapestries - plastic - publicity - architecture - placards and so on) should cause you to think and not to laugh and rashly judge. There are toils and values which deserve to be examined and seriously pondered.

Dear girls and boys anxious to learn, do please add a little seriousness and patience to your ardent zeal! Do listen: if the artist who for years has been continually drawing, painting, stylizing, inventing, composing and recomposing, moulding and remoulding, according to his taste and character, all that surrounds him — objects, flowers, persons, animals, costumes and landscapes — if in order to create and not to copy, to interpret and not to imitate, if in order to bring

to life this plastic world and this style of his own he has been obliged to struggle and toil, how can you understand at once, how can you judge and rashly criticize? ».

b) seriousness and patience

« Have you ever seen modern paintings, have you ever lingered in front of an avanguard picture and tried to understand its contents? Have you ever read the books, the polemics, the monographies, the manifests of new Italian and foreign artists? ».

« No, we have not read them. We have just glanced through them without ever examining them ».

« Of course, that's the point, my dear girls and ironic young men (the group of the listeners had, by this time, grown considerably). The Art problem is not as easy as one thinks and, at the same time, it is not as difficult and hermetic as some people believe. Art is a language, just as science, history, philosophy, mathematics, french and german. It is a language which one must know, and once you have learnt it, you will be able to read and understand.

c) learn to see

Marangoni wrote. Have you read his book so entitled? Read it again, learn it by heart; it possesses a clarifying wisdom which should spread everywhere, especially in schools and Academies, for it teaches to understand the art of the past, which is the same thing as understanding the art of to-day. In order to dive deep into art and also in order to love and enjoy it, to understand it in its inmost meaning, one must be endowed with a special sensibility, with education and good taste and with love for it. But this taste, this sensibility and love must be free, open, boundless. One must be able to see and to read also those forms which are not to one's liking. One must try to understand also those expressions representing unusual things. One must ask the Artist for the reasons which lead him on to his individual research.

Your hostility is explainable but it is also culpable ».

d) subjective art

« I wish to explain once more and to clear your doubts: the contents of these paintings are not narrative and photographic as you will find in the work of many picture-makers. They are not imitative, as they teach you at the Academy. It is not physical anatomy — it is not single fixed perspective. This is not objective — historical — documentary painting, it is subjective painting — of emotion and sensation, of interpretation and creation. It is a plastic colored language with which the artist presents his own inmost world, and through which he narrates his visions and his imaginative pictorial

considerations. To an artist, nature in all its aspects -- from the smallest details to the most complex views -- presents itself under particular shapes, similitudes, emotions and sensations which he has the right and the duty of taking in consideration and of representing. The artist does not say what others have already told him; he deserves to be listened when he says something which is really his own. And especially when he says it with the power, the clearness, the incisive persuasion of style of strong unmistakable artists like Boccioni and Picasso, like Martini and Carrà, like De Chirico and Severini, like Sironi and Prampolini and like this Depero who seems to me one of the strongest stylizers, one of the boldest and fantastic plastics of to-day».

e) but what does this represent?

(here is a question which the public is always asking)

One of the listeners comes forward and faces me with these words: «For Heaven's sake, stop talking such nonsense. I bet there is not one person here who understands your paintings! For instance, what does this represent?».

«It is a church with a mountain in the background». «A mountain? I have never seen mountains of that kind!».

«That's just the point. The painting is interesting because only I have interpreted a mountain in this way».

«Then you paint only for yourself?».

«I paint first for myself and then for those people who understand, respect and follow me and who buy my paintings (and they are many). If my painting does not interest you, I can't help it: one admirer less. I still have enough to continue on my way, to express and paint my dreams and ideas. Dreams and ideas which have caused people to speak and to think. Dreams and ideas which have spread and created admirers and imitators in Italy and abroad. Dreams and ideas which, as time goes by, cause more and more interest and thinking. Even now (and I may tell you that I am not the keeper of this Gallery as I had told these young ladies, but the author of these paintings) even now I could make a list of many examples of plagiarism caused by my work and recall many instances of high consideration for it and this would perhaps cause you to change your mind or silence you. But it does not matter. Go on, say all you have to say, attack me where and how you like, only do not speak ten at a time: one by one ask your questions, specify your charges — politely or rudely, I don't care — and give me time to answer».

f) dynamism is not dead!

«You were saying that futurism is finished, that it has no longer a reason for being, that it never was even a theory, that it has been denied even by its first supporters?».

I answer: « That is your personal opinion. Marinetti is dead and so is Boccioni, Sant' Elia and so are many many others, this is true. But their best works are not dead. Their word is still alive and their teaching is eloquent. Many exaggerations are dead; the first polemic and experimental forms have been surpassed. We have seen the end of many young ideologies and of some burlesque transient parodies. But there are still many futurists who work hard, there are many avanguardie expressions, dynamic, metaphysical, surrealist and abstract swelling with future life. Dynamism is a principle, an aim, a futuristic religion which was, is, and will be eternally. Neither you nor millions of traditionalists and denigrators will ever be able to deny and kill it. Only in the dynamic forces of the universe, of the earth, of God and of man lie the reasons of our existence, of our life». « And if Umberto Boccioni created plastic dynamism, drawing his inspiration from the dynamism of our epoch, he did nothing but recall the artist to his noble task and to his peremptory missionary duty for the conception and realization of a modern art. He did nothing but reveal a new wonderful experimental plastic field of Italian honour and pride, of international honour and pride. If you cannot understand this with your small and petty mind, we will do without your approval. Young and old people have understood, for they are people with an open mind, anxious to learn and to love what our times are revealing ».

g) ancient art is beautiful - classical art is attractive

« Our masters, the great masters of the past are imposing and convincing. Their example imposes respect and emotional nobility. But they are ancient. They are of five hundred years ago. Must I walk backwards from morning to evening? Do you not consider this a cruel sentence? Why always backwards? You drive me crazy. To go back to the past with books, schools, newspapers, exhibitions, lectures and speeches! The great of the past! Michelangelo, Raffaello, Mantegna, Foscolo, Leopardi — great dreamers, great plastics, apocalyptic visionaries. You are quite right they are sublime, not to be equalled (or so you think), I agree with you that they deserve the greatest respect. In cathedrals in art galleries in museums, framed in gold, on pedestals of silver, in Paradise, anywhere you wish. But after all they are personages and values of five hundred years ago. Allow me at least half an hour a day in which I may see the things of to-day and occupy my mind with our reality, with our customs and atmosphere, with our anxieties and our factories, our theatre and art, our machines and books, even with our mistakes, with our ideologies which fill us with zeal and emotion, with pride and wonder. I hope you will understand, allow and admit that there exists a problem of Antiquity and a problem of Modernity. These problems exist in every field. I am particularly interested in the problem of Art ».



f. depero

steadiness in velocity (oil 1923) motor-cyclist



psychological portrait of f. t. marinetti (oil 1922)

f. depero



novecento dispute - (oil 1924)

L. depero



polenta on a dull fire - (oil 1927) property gallery of modern art - rome

f. depero

h) the patrons of ancient art

They are generally merchants and speculators and they love business and bargains and not the intrinsic value of the work. There are also scholars and keen collectors who have a weakness for names, dates, schools and subjects (I know one who loves only paintings depicting medioeval battles). Their understanding, however, does not go beyond the illustrative, sentimental, literary, historical and documentary contents. Their technical interest does not go beyond anatomy, draperies, likeness, and rethorical, aulic, religious and anecdotal composition. They are men who are limited by their own preferences and who walk backwards towards the past: dreamers of patinas, of shadows and of patchings, frequenters of patrician families, of museums and of antiquarians. They do not interest me although their erudition and passion deserve appreciation. But I do love

i) the patrons of modernity

because I am nearer to them. They live in my time and breathe our ideas. They love clear colors and fresh paintings full of air, of light and of pictorial audacity, full of our unreserved joy and of the innovating song of our pallet, full of our lyrical torments and freed from classical chains, from atavic scruples from conventional worries. The new loftiness of mind of these lovers of modern art is really worthy of praise, for they are the supporters of living talent. I cannot say they are all clever and infallible. In their midst you will also find narrow-minded people and fools who are not able to choose what they wish to buy and who make great blunders. But among the works of their collections there are works of real artists who have made their way by sheer talent.

j) a classicist says :

« Modern art is ugliness, modern art is an aberration of art. It is an affront to common sense, to taste, to beauty and to the classical nobleness of the human figure and of obvious truth. Give me ancient artists a thousand times rather than modern depravation. You have corrupted our youth with your deformations and your revolutionary, quackish «isms».

..... Just a moment, please, I listen to you if you have ideas of your own to appose and I have no objection to hear your criticism, but I beg you not to exaggerate with offensive and rude words and expressions. I respect all creeds and opinions and am willing to discuss them, but I do not allow you to call quacks those artists who devoted all their life to their artistic ideals, and to their noble research with as much faith and toil as your venerated ancient artists. I will also add that, perhaps, you know much less about these an-

cient artists than myself and that, perhaps, you appreciate them with less understanding than I do, for you must know that their toil and struggle to overcome the misunderstandings, the envy, the calumnies and the obstacles of their time, correspond exactly to the toil and struggle of the artists of to-day. But you are obstinate and prejudiced and I guess you do not intend to give in and to try to talk things over so that we might come to an understanding: therefore. I am not going to waste any more words on you. I have said, clearly and obviously, what I think of the artists of old times: they were great and they suited their time; they created works which were in tune with their ideals and with their epoch: works of a style contemporary to their needs. My advice to you is this: have an Empire bathroom made for you, send in an order (if you can afford it) for a Fiat car — Roman style, and, if you are still a bachelor, marry a melancholic, chlorotic, romantic woman. I have nothing against it, no objection whatever. You are quite free and your oddness amuses me. But I have the right to enjoy the same freedom, to love the things I prefer, that is, all that twentieth century style and taste can offer, and to choose from it what pleases me most.

k) a lover of nineteenth century art speaks

At this point, one voice is heard above the hubbub of comments. « My dear painter, I also prefer modern art to ancient art, I am fed up with academies, with evening nudes, with anatomic poses of all kinds, with severe, photographic, common portraits. I am a lover of nineteenth century art, I should almost say: an impressionist. As you say, I am an artist and a lover of art who likes living colors — the fresh pallet of open air visions and pictorial hazards, full of suggestive impastings and inspired by nature with its clear waters, its changeable skies, its sunlight, source of infinite play. I am a naturalist painter of flowers, of fruit, of sea-bathers on the shore, tanned by the mediterranean sky, reflecting the violet of the sky, the green of the waters, the copper of the sand. It is a modern painting with plenty of room and of air, depicting a human and natural life, with pictorial feeling and plastic sensuality. This is the artistic honesty which must be valued and appreciated, this is the modernity which I prefer and defend. Not your expressions — deformistic, mad, hermetic, mechanical, surrealist, meaningless and uncomprehensible! « Bravo! You have your own opinions and I appreciate you much more than that gentleman who sees nothing but ancient art. Let us leave him in his show-window together with medioeval statues and cuirasses to enjoy on his stiff pedestal all the dust and the sacred silence of our ancestors. You are younger, more alive and open, animated by a sincere enthusiasm and by a diligent passion for the reality which is around you. You want to paint life bravely. Good.

Only, you have made a small mistake. You have said that you are a lover of nineteenth century art, that you hate the stifling class-room of classicism, that you prefer the open class-room of the country and of the sunny sea-shore, but that you want to depict reality. To begin with, I must make you notice that we are exactly half way through the twentieth century. Therefore, to speak of the nineteenth century means to speak of five hundred years ago. It is not much, but it is not little. Then you speak of naturalism which is the typical art of the end of the nineteenth century. I hope you will excuse me: you think you are young, but I am sorry to have to call your attention to the fact that you are elderly and rather behind the times. During the last twenty or thirty years, much progress has been made; in my opinion, you have made a mistake in not following it or, at least, in not noticing that others have achieved it.

1) an impressionist adds:

«But I am an impressionist naturalist, an admirer of Cézanne, of Van Gogh and of Gauguin; I like Spadini and de Pisis, I am not a common naturalist, I love brush-strokes rich and clear, luminous and transparent impastings, suggestive tonalities, blue and green shadows, careful ease and the understanding of volumes and of the pictorial contents».

«Good, I am glad to hear you say so, but your point of view is limited to color, to sincerity, to the tonal and formal expression, to the vibration of light and to approximate technique. Your ideological conception is undoubtedly sincere, it represents an important transition milestone. But this was all right fifty years ago, it was the daring language of that time. To-day it has become the language of thousands and thousands of able and amateurish followers. Impressionism revealed light, freedom of color, freedom of forms, but it did not give the lasting rules of this freedom.

It cannot last for it has not given enough character and power of style. In my opinion, its expressive contents are not solid enough. We must strengthen ideas and expressions. Dynamic futurists, decomposers, static cubists, lyrical expressionists, magic metaphysies and stubborn surrealists and abstractists have worked for this aim with as much sincerity and still greater courage. These artists have seen beyond reality and have understood a deeper and loftier meaning of truth; they are endowed with sharper intelligence, with a clearer spirit of research, with an unsatisfiable longing for investigation and they are enlivened with a wider, universal artistic conception. Their art represents in space and time the evolution of an epoch, the architectonical essence of our century at the head of past centuries. Not only what everyone can see, not only what everyone can understand and which satisfies common sense and a refined taste, but also the complex outward and inward drama of vision, of

knowledge, of interpretation and of creation. This, my dear impressionist, is the wish, the aspiration, the aim to be reached, of the greatest twentieth century artists of to-day.

deformation

At first sight, this word looks inappropriate when talking of art, for it recalls the word « deformed », that is a wrong, contorted form, an ugly form, a miscarriage; but in the artistic language, « deformation » means transformation of reality, idealization of reality, interpretation of reality.

It has been proved, through all times and through the works of different artists and styles, that one single form of beauty and of truth does not exist and that there is, on the contrary, a continuous change of artistic beauty and truth. There is also a popular maxim saying « beauty is not beauty, beauty is what one likes ». And I would like to add that since liking is something personal, it depends from the degree of good taste, of development and of education which has been achieved by each one of us. The artist, therefore, who is endowed with a special temperament and with a specific sensibility, may like things and subjects which have no attraction whatever for those who are not artists. Moreover, he likes these things and subjects and is interested in them in his own particular way, a way which is unknown to a normal public and which it is his task to reveal.

The artist does not care to reveal the beauty which is already known, but he wants to make evident the expressive values which the public cannot easily understand. From a common object, a simple corner, an ugly figure, the artist draws lofty aspects and original, expressive representations.

An apparently insignificant or repulsive reality may be, for an artist, a source of beauty and of inspiration. The artist reaches a suggestive expressiveness by manipulating it according to his own taste and style, by lengthening or shortening it, by violating proportions and perspectives, by adding analysis and synthesis, by illuminating it with unreal lights and by giving it a peculiar physiognomy or an independent architectonic and rhythmical structure. What is real and natural has never been depicted, in a true work of art, with faithful veracity: it was always rendered according to a definite character and style which the artist possesses and which he was able to achieve through a long, passionate hard work of research, of poetry, of spontaneity and of selection.

To deform, that is, to transform, to take a natural form and carry it towards ideal form, towards a stylistic expression willed by the artist who magically sees, hears and understands, is the true aim of art. And this above all technique, beyond common taste, without

the usual way of seeing and considering things, people and landscapes, beyond all that is usual and habitual.

The eye of the artist, his hearing, his taste and intuition see, hear, love and conceive unusual and amazing lights, expressions, harmonies, foreshortenings and conceptions. He is allowed to express and represent at his pleasure, for other people's enjoyment, causing pleasant or unpleasant surprise, even at the cost of the most shocked reaction.

The secret of creation lies in deformation, that is, in the right of transforming and of interpreting reality. In it are enclosed the elements impressing character and style to the work. The artist must, of course, use his intelligence in choosing the way of deforming, the character to be impressed to the idealization, and in giving his work a balance to be evenly distributed in the work, so that his creation, that is, his achievement of transformation, may become convincing, attractive and rightly suggestive.

If the public does not quite understand at first, it does not matter. Understanding will come later, by degrees, thanks to intelligence and good-will. And time, who has always been the best and most infallible judge will throw light and shadow upon artists and works, upon right, successful deformation and upon incorrect attempts.

dilettantism

Many years ago, I had one of my many travelling artistic adventures. I was travelling with a friend. In front of us sat an officer with whom my friend was acquainted. He introduced us. The first world war was just over and the officer told us a few moving war anecdotes full of life and of experience. At a certain moment, the officer rose from his seat, took down a small case from the rack, sat down again, put it on his knees and proceeded to open it. I was curious and rather excited at the thought of seeing a documentary photograph or an old relic recalling the episodes he had told us. I was instead surprised at having to examine a small picture painted by him which he was taking as a present to a relation of his. I just said: « So, you paint, too... » It was an ordinary painting, a bad copy of some common oleography. After a few words on art, we went back to war anecdotes which were undoubtedly more interesting and real and more suitable to his military competence. I said no word of praise or of blame, but I made him understand that I am among those who think that people should devote themselves to their own trade. He was, of course, a gentleman; he did not pride himself of his artistic qualities and did not trade his pictorial efforts. Frankly, I must say I do not love or appreciate dilettantism in any field. It is true that everyone has the right of doing what they please privately; but those who think their hobby is art and try to sell their abominable products

and make of them a petty speculation, a means of publicity, posing as critics and artists, deceiving foolish, incompetent and superficial people are really too much for my patience.

He, who is not born for art, and to whom art is not daily spiritual and material bread, he, for whom art does not represent the daily beating of the spirit and the one and only insisting voice of the heart, of the soul and of the mind should keep aloof, cherish in his own home his amateurish produce and be very careful in expressing wrong and too simple criticisms which might also be hurtful. And if he has some intelligent and honest scruples, let him conscientiously examine his work and realize its worth.

He, who has not learnt, studied and anxiously loved art for years and years, from sunrise to sunset, in every situation, in every moment, he, who has not understood and conceived it as a religion and a mission, he, who has not art in his blood and does not feel it as a daily torment and passionate interest, should do well to play with it at home and alone and have the modesty of not sinning in public. In my opinion, this would be an action of artistic honesty. But to speak of honesty in art is just like speaking of honesty in life — a rare thing, difficult to find on the lips of many but in the mind and heart of very few.

fairy island and multicolored puppets

a) the poet of assuan

One day, Michael Semenoff comes to my studio with a friend of his: a small gentleman, a little bent, with a nose as straight as a drawing square, gold teeth, feminine shoes and a vitreous, nasal laugh. A man of good nerves and strong will, endowed with a superior culture. He is a professor of egyptian history, investigating and observing with the sensibility of an artist, and also a writer, a lover of the people, of verse and of metaphysics. From time to time, I still continue in my dreams animated conversations with this beloved poet. He lived for a long time at Assuan, at Capri and at Positano. Here he built for himself a tower on the ruins of one of the many towers which in the past centuries defended the Gulf of Amalfi and the neapolitan coast from the attacks of pirates. He dug a cellar in the rock with the help of mines. In summer, he used to sun-bathe on his high sunny terrace and in winter, shut in his fortress, he would write and study, all alone, among the howling of the wind and the high foam of the waves: a composer of lyrics, but also a man who knew how to enjoy life and how to suffer. His name is Gilbert Clavel. As soon as he enters my studio, he stops amazed. He finds himself, unexpectedly, in the world of his dreams. He tells me he is writing a short story which takes place on an island covered with an unreal crystal flora of enchanting and changeable colors, an island of a

mechanized style on which there is a chimerical life. He is stunned and thoughtful at the sight of the sketch for the plastic scenario which I created for the «Russian Ballets»: it is the fairy island of his dreams which he sees realized and within reach of his hand. So we get to know each other and we become friends. After a few days, this mutual understanding gets deeper and fraternal and he invites me to Capri as his guest.

Together with Rosetta, we slowly drive up the hill among walls loaded with flowers and bushes in full bloom, among gardens of columns, porches and cages of wines, under arches of cactus, amid cottages, small villas and boarding-houses gaily painted pink and blue, white and red. Swarms of naked sun-tanned children play on the beach among boats and scattered wash dancing with the singing wind. Golden rocks stand out from the blue crystals of the sea and flash against the azure glass of the sky. Bare-footed countrywomen, elastic, as brown as creoles, bearing on their head terracotta pots-grapes, figs, flowers, rough walls and smooth colored walls — clouds of hues — waves of sky and water — exuberant song of paradise.

Here one only lives of poetry: song is the one and only voice and one lives with the sole purpose of dreaming. To forget, to love, to dream and to laugh freely, surrendering to the waves. The skin breathes, one's whole being vibrates with visual sensations, reality seems translucent.

After Capri, going up the hill, a high yellow wall of genista dives vertically from the top down to the sea. A small Madonna placed in the hollow of the steep rock warns people of the danger and protects them from accidents. The Gulf of Naples opens in front of us like a huge wondering mouth.

We reach Anacapri, the goal of our journey. From the gate of the «rose garden» of the Queen of Sweden comes a perfumed breeze swelling our breath and wrapping our minds with gauzes of hypnotic delights. And yet the small village is harmless, clean, white. It looks like a toy left by chance on this wild plain and it is so delightful and delicate that I almost fear it might be torn away, in a wicked night, by a savage power or by an angry gust of wind.

Our poet friend has found a small house for us. We walk down a short path looking like the bed of a torrent: red gates and steps of shining small bricks with yellow and blue drawings. A terrace. Below us, a large cataract of olive-trees. We go in: the rooms, the kitchen and the linen are cool and limpid. On the chest of drawers we see paper flowers, frames made with shells with faded photographs of the far-away sailor and of the dead grand-mother.

The next morning, we bathe at the «marina piccola»: rustic bay of delights, liquid nests, arm-chairs of rock and floating cushions of moss. In front of us, the mouldy sphynxs of the Faraglioni, indif-

ferent to the kisses and bites of the waves. Saltish smells in the sweating air. The red of geraniums is on the walls of the houses; the blue of the sky is inlaid in their floors; the plants of the daisies are as big as mulberry-trees; the cactuses have thousands of faces: one may look at them but not touch them. From morning to night, we are intoxicated and enraptured, day-dreaming.

Love and flowers bloom on the rocks, on the balconies, at the windows; natives, poets and tourists are left static and spell-bound on this floating board of fairy-land which never reaches the shores of reality.

b) the angel goes to and fro on a double wire

The procession of Saint Anthony is the procession of Anacapri. All take out their best blankets, their multicolored carpets and wedding lace and spread them out on the walls, on window-sills, between tree and tree, as a royal wash and a colored drapery of a barbarian rite.

A double wire is stretched up along the street. By means of a pulley, a boy, sitting astride the wall, moves along the wire a winged angel with pink paper skirts, shining celluloid legs and wide open glass eyes. He holds tied to his arms a bunch of candles which were offered by the inhabitants of the village. At the cross-roads, the Saint stops. The angel goes before him, comes down and lays to his feet the bunch of offerings. The believers kneel down and pray while the choirs implore with a loud voice. Then the angel goes up again and starts out on his gliding wire.

The church-boys in their surplice, the long row of white girls, the women in black, the almost invisible candle-flames, the men of the choir, the flowers, the incense, the draped houses, the exulting nature make a festive mass surrounding the beaming Saint. Showers of falling petals and rising visible emotions. The windows are like paintings on a wall, crowded with bewildered heads. Clusters of curious people have bloomed in the street. Cats are silent, motionless, crouching on the steps of the stairs; hens have stopped their clucking and their eyes have a staring, squinting look. Even flowers look at the arriving Saint, while the sun has concentrated its beams on the blessed golden patron. The vast sacred scene tosses on the elastic blue of the sea and the sky wraps it within large folds of silvery silk.

c) conversations as bright as stars

In the evening, after having bathed, we stop at Capri for dinner. We wander around the square and through the avenues (set as balconies on the back of the island) and then slowly make our way towards Anacapri. The moon looks at us, at the sea and at



f. de pooter

the cow - (oil 1924)



charcoal drawing - 1925

f. depero

the island with its round acetylene face. And now we are the guests of Villa Clavel. It is a country house which has been cleaned, rebuilt and furnished with good taste, surrounded by a fine, well-ordered garden.

The large terrace rests under a Tunisian tent. It has the great merit of having a very deep well which does not only contain the freshest water of the village, but also a large pail crammed with bottles of rare wines, white and red, sweet and dry, from Italy and from abroad. Clavel watches over his «library» with love and competence. The hours while away and ideas light up in the diaphanous shadow of the moonlit night. Fancy shines and conversation sparkles together with the stars. Discussions flow as wine in the cups and time flies with unobserved delight. One, two, three, four o'clock. The round table is a wrecked deck of dead bottles. «Toby», Semennoff's dog, is snoring. We leave the enchanted terrace of this vessel of seduction. Good-night, my dear Clavel!

d) the marchioness has heels of mother-of-pearl and the sailor wants to strangle his wife

Having called at the «Quisisana Hotel» of Capri, I hear that Marchesa Casati-Stampa, the noblewoman whose features were depicted, stylized and interpreted by the most original Parisian and Italian painters (Boldini and Balla included), is staying there for a few days. I leave my card with my best greetings and with the wish to see her soon in my studio.

And, at six p. m. of the same day, Marchesa Casati comes unexpectedly to my studio. She is accompanied by a neapolitan prince and by a white greyhound elastic as a feather. She wears shoes with mother-of-pearl heels; she is friendly and very clever. After having examined my paintings, she chooses one depicting a vision of Capri with the Clavel Villa in the centre. On its terrace, the poet is lying down, as red as a small demon and surrounded by figures, flora and perspectives of the island. He looks like a strange sleeping king among his fantastic possessions.

Caterina and Domenico are my landlord and lady, an old couple of humble folk. They live on the ground floor. She is bronzed, with eyes of fire. She often peeps in at our door with her apron full of vegetables, figs, walnuts, hazelnuts and oranges which she offers my wife for a few pennies, always content of what she gets: «Madame, give me what you think best». Her husband is an old sailor. His skin is rough and sunburnt, just covering the bones and the visible muscles. He has lived on all the seas of the globe for forty years. He is brutal and impulsive and yet as sensitive as a child.

One stifling afternoon, my wife hears a strange choked moaning in their kitchen. Suspecting something wrong, she immediately goes down the stairs pretending to need some fresh water from the well.

In a corner, on a torn sofa, Caterina lies rattling. Domenico strides to and fro, excited and upset, cursing his wife and wishing to set his hands on her again and to finish her. But the sudden entrance of my wife alters his plans and keeps him back.

On the morning of our departure, Domenico is waiting for us at the gate with large tears in his eyes and a bunch of flowers which he shyly holds behind his back. He turns to Rosetta: «these are for you, as our greeting».

In Capri, I met an old strange German fortune-teller, a kind of witch. Her parlour was full of stuffed owls, of yellowish, worm-eaten books and of odd horrifying engravings. From the walls hung graphics of large lined hands, marked with numbers, words and symbols. Idols and small statues everywhere. The light was shut out and the room had an unpleasant smell of cats and of corpses. This peculiar lady visited one of my shows at Capri and after having carefully examined my paintings, turned to my friend Clavel with these very words: «In the veins of this artist there are drops of negro blood of two thousand years ago. His art is very interesting, but lacking in smoke».

e) windmill and hatchet strokes

After four hours in a sailing boat, we reach Positano on the shore of Amalfi. We land in a wild, steep bay watched by the ruins of the Saracen towers. In the small harbour, half hidden, there is a simple wind-mill which has not been used for many years. Now it has been transformed into a dwelling. The bed, the wash, the kitchen are scattered among wheels, canals, presses, pulleys, grinding-stones and large stone bowls, disks of rocks and mouldy beams. It is a rough scene, framed, turned, dug out and indented through hatchet work. It is a primeval machinery of wood, constructed with popular inventiveness. The hatchet strokes are as alive as those of roughly sketched statues.

f) green monkeys, blue bears and flying snakes

At Capri, we often spoke of the stage. I had just finished the costumes and the scenario for the «Russian Ballets», both of which ended so miserably, when an idea flashed through my mind: in order to obtain a better geometrical sense and more proportional freedom in the costumes, in the characters and in the relation between scene and figures, one should completely forget man and substitute him with an invented automaton, that is, with a new puppet of free proportions, of inventive and fantastic style, offering mimic, paradoxical surprising possibilities.

I also intended to give animated life and suitable appearance to the plastic figures, to the scenes and to the characters which my fancy was planning. Thus silver and red-black savages were born

and harlequins colored orange-yellow and white pinocchios — men with golden, blue and flat moustaches like humanised coleoptera de luxe. The fauna was also recreated: green monkeys, blue bears, metallic snakes and flying hinged butterflies.

There followed an eruption of drawings, of discussions and estimated accounts. The isle of Capri offered me an iridescent pallet suitable to the most contrasting and fanciful fairy-tales: I borrowed from the hypnotising Neapolitan gulf scenarios of rainbow which were just the thing for the new ballets of this «Plastic theatre».

Clavel is rich of means and of mind and I feel a millionaire of faith of enthusiasm and of fancy. The combination is perfect and we leave Capri after a long period of study and preparation.

We return to Rome in order to realize the «Plastic ballets».

Scenes and characters created by Depero. Scenes: perspectives of constructed landscapes. Mechanized flora and fantastic architectures having a metallic crystal style. Plastic and mobile wooden characters, painted with very bright colors. Music conductor: Maestro Alfredo Casella. Choreographies by Depero and G. Clavel. Acted by the puppet Company Gorno dell'Acqua. The ballets:

1. CLOWNS

a luminous floreal village - clowns-dancer-hen and butterflies.

Music by Alfredo Casella

2. THE MAN WITH A MOUSTACHE

a golden road - blue dancer - moustachioed men - drunken dances - white mice and black cat - rain of cigarettes.

Music by Tyrwhitt

3. THE SAVAGES

tropical landscape - red and black savages - the gigantic savage woman and the green snake

Music by Francesco Malipiero

4. SHADOWS

dynamic constructed shadows - gray and black planes - games of light

5. THE BLUE BEAR

dance of the bear and parade of the puppets.

Music by Batok

g) taken from „comoedia“ - 1925

Depero's «Plastic ballets», shown in 1918 at the Theatre of Palazzo Odescalchi were supported and financed by Gilbert Clavel, a Swiss art critic endowed with delicate modern sensibility. Depero's «Plastic Ballets» came before all other theatrical modernistic manifesta-

tions without exception. That was the time when Sergio Diaghilew first met Italian futurist artists from whom he was to learn much and enrich his artistic patrimony. Among the youngest and most promising futurists of that time was Fortunato Depero, the triumpher of Paris who has exhibited this year at the Grand Palais also one of his plastic models. The violent painter of Rovereto is therefore one of the few fore-runners of the forms of plastic scenomobile stages and he is the very first ideator of plastic ballets which he set up with the co-operation of Gilbert Clavel. Fortunato Depero's ballets are among the most original, successful and well-performed scenic innovations of the avanguard international world. The prize now awarded to Depero by the Great Exhibition of Decorative Art of Paris is therefore rightly followed by the publication of the theory of the Deperian Plastic Ballets written by its pioneer.

h) comment by gilbert clavel

One of the salient characteristics of modern art is that of progressing in all directions and of exploiting every chance enabling it to make itself understood by the public. The plastic theatre is excellent for this purpose for it substitutes mimical action with episodic action and, by abolishing words, it leads to purely formal representative ways. In a closed scene, in which every form of naturalistic development remains in the background and stands out only as dependent etheronomic element, our sensations are fixed and harmonised. The distinction between proscenium and background is abolished and the scenario, no longer interpreted as a merely decorative means, is unified to the thesis of the action and reveals itself as a dynamic continuation of the figured emotions. The scene which, in this new scale of values, should be placed in the midst of the public, contains the principal motifs of the action: it reflects and transforms its most important agents and adapts itself to the mood of the stage. Thus the scene is the definition of the ideas created by the artist and cannot be detached from the whole and considered as a thing apart. Being closely related to the active performance, it transmits, continues and extends the mimical gesture with its lines and colors, it accentuates the rythm, commutes spacial illusions and, by transcending from motionless statics, it conglobates to a living and independent organ in the performing action. Just as in a completed building in which architecture and sculpture co-operate and attain harmonic continuity, it is necessary to create on the stage an uninterrupted contact of scenic and figurative means.

The plastic theatre gives us the opportunity of projecting on a same plane a great quantity of means of artistic expression and to make them one. It widens the visual horizon of the real world and leads towards one single centre irradiating things and objects of different

kinds and various derivation. Figures in space vary according to the reasons causing choice and feeling, and bloom naturally between two changes. Things do not appear within the real limits of a normal action, but according to their specific characteristics and to their formal relationship: they make up the feeling, the internal adventure and do not act passively as proclaimers of descriptive action. The abstraction of the real world up to pure form displaces things in the accord of their metaphysical dynamism; they rhythmically flow to our receptive faculties, give life and purpose to one another, become divided in their meaning and are question and answer at the same time. Closeness affects distance, what is boundless affects what is limited, what is similar affects its contrary. The square becomes a circle, the cube vanishes into the sphere, the delta grows into the pyramid. The zig-zag line seeks the curve and solves the tension of the spiral. From the chaos, unity stands out and dissonance follows the symphony of sounds.

The rhythm of numbers gives to things the infiniteness of their motions, and the intensity of form and color balances them exactly.

A figured drama must be developed from the simple relations of daily events and must find its achievement in a realization of elementary forms which has not yet been attained. It has no real and moral limit and cannot, therefore, be liable of inspections regarding its literary contents. In this figurative drama there is an evolution of consequent feelings caused by the affinity and by the association of appearances.

The practical problem of such a theatre may be solved in various ways. We think that, to begin with, the best means is offered by puppets since every single figure makes up a definite unity which can be articulated without much difficulty. Their mimical possibilities are, of course, limited; however, they have the advantage of allowing a unitarian direction of the whole and a strict control of the gestures to be made according to the beats of the music. On the other hand, the application of geometrical figures on the human body causes many difficulties and contradicts, as superphotation, the almost mathematical rules governing every stylization of lines and of abstract planes. For, the animations of such a scenic apparatus, the figures and spaces of which must refer to an absolute unity of measure in all its composing parts, require such a precision of technical finishings that the slightest change creates entangled confusion of all the scene.

Rhythm is the soul of all actions and its accentuation requires, as it were, a musical skill. It conducts every mechanical gesture of the figure and of its articulations, it rules the phases of the lighting and orders the pauses. The performance draws its dominant feeling from the harmonic union of every value — as in a painting — with the difference that the barriers imposed by the frame are sur-

passed by the continued dynamism of the scene. In the sacred rites of our ancestors, the human figure was a mobile statue and architecture was the echo of its gestures. Spirit revealed its form. The action was the rythm of the alternation of events. The temple acquired the grandeur of a cosmic scene, and art was, in the widest sense of the word, the expression and the religion of life.

fear of the machine

The so-called normal, moderate, wise and able artist is horrified by machines and by mechanical structures which rise, antipretty, geometrical and metallic, on pale landscapes and on withered, picturesque foliage, on mountains covered with pictorial rags, engraved with rocky clefts and populated with old cottages. A cylindrical pole of centrifugated cement, the parallel, silvery fugue of electric wires, the powerful cylinders of water-works and of artillery, the shining rails and the nocturnal trajectory of luminous bullets, the long poles of wireless stations, geometrizing, breaking up and violating our sunsets and our pearly dawns, are shocking forms and discordant values for almost all nostalgic and shy artists, for conventional purists and for those traditionalists who are habitually and continually discontent.

At a Venetian Biennale, somebody (who probably was incompetent of art) rightly and naively observed that among thousands of paintings there was not a single one representing a motor-cycle, a motor-car, a dynamo and so on. Therefore, away with machines: antipictorial instruments, unworthy of the pallet and to be shut out from studios. However, (allow me to whisper this) if these wise painters received as a present a car of the latest model, comfortable and well-oiled, with its enamelled and crystal naked parts, then the machine would perhaps rise in their estimation and would probably bloom from the grey impastings of their paintings, it would burst out, booming, afire with speed, dashing on furrows of living blood with point of phosphorus and the irradiating pupils of its searching head-lights.

Ask a machine-gunner, a gunner, or a tank driver what they think of their machine-gun, of their gun, of their tank. Ask a scientist, a specialist, a keen technician what they think of their instruments and precious apparatuses. And then tell me why artists should not love the splendour of machines and consider them as inspirers of a new style, why they should abolish them from their works, from esthetic and figurative consideration, from their canvases, from their mosaics and statues. Open your eyes wide and acknowledge that a part of civilization and of glory belongs to machines and that, thanks to them, our style will get clearer and more precise and we shall be able to conquer a certain artistic victory for a modern style.

Have patience, dear engines, a minority of bold artists sings your praises with sounding poetry, with indented verses, with images of steel, with aerial lyrisms. These daring painters, decomposing form and style, these pioneers of research and of meaning will glorify you with their artistic talent and you will shine at the head, at the foot and in the heart of new art.

Your splendour will give a metallic style to landscapes and to those human figures that have loved you so much. Your brightness will expand as sunbeams. The light of your face of steel and the beating of your vibrating heart will radiate through the blue of the sky and of the sea, on the fertile green of our earth and will be part of our daily life. You have created a new atmosphere which is no longer that which it has been for centuries: romantic, feminine, sweet and scented evening breeze.

The air we breathe to-day is another fluid, thick with aerial steel spread in space, cast with Oxygen and Azote. The leaves of trees are sharp, their trunks are as solid as the axis of your wheels. Even the rays of the sun have acquired plastic consistence. Reality appears imbued with a style of steel. We, modern men, are no longer old and discontent pedestrians, musing gossip, shivering at every contrary breeze and spreading poisonous pessimism. Our skull was cast with your metallic back, our legs are strengthened by wires of steel and by bars of undaunted will: all our faculties tend towards the creation of a style of steel.

Machines: the splendour and elasticity of wheels — the rythm of gearings — the rockets of head-lights and their dazzling reflections — the frames of your muscles — the gliding flesh of your straps — the hexagonal pupils of screws and bolts — the tubular heart of engines — your smooth skin, grey and silvery, without wrinkles, spots and herpes -- Of all this consists our mechanical poetry, our demountable anatomy, our centrifugal and centripetal perspectives, our style of light and motion, our wanted steel style.

Egyptians had a style of their own — Japanese, Indians and Negroes had and still have a personal style. And we also will have a style: a powerful unimitable style, thanks to our inventing genius, to our heroism and to machines — a style of white men of the twentieth century, the century of speed, the century of steel and of atomic energy.

form and chiaroscuro

In order to judge thoroughly a painting, in order to decide on its negative and positive values, after having considered drawing and color, we come to examine form. Also in this case special formulas are not necessary: one must only have common sense, good taste, a

practised eye, intelligent reasoning and some experience in valuing technical and artistic qualities.

Form: outstanding or dull, plastically rendered or flat, clear or ambiguous, commonly descriptive or cleverly interpreted. Moving or unpalpably uncertain chiaroscuro. Sure, precise, cutting perspective — or unequal and approximate. Statically single conventional perspective — or multiple, dynamic, boldly original. Constructive and anatomical skill, or ignorance and plastic incapacity. These are the first elementary observations and the considerations on technical values which should be made in judging a work of art. But these notes on drawing, color, form and professional art refer only to the technical contents. After this come character, style and the subject. It is here that the enormous refuse of the millions of paintings which are daily painted in the world comes to the surface: they sprout like mushrooms and, fortunately, like mushrooms they wither and rot away.

genius

It is a big frightening word, a short word which makes one shudder, like the word « fire », « lightning », « dynamite », « discovery », « eruption », « atomic bomb ». Before using it, one should take precautions: it goes off dangerously, its meaning is mysterious and obscure. Not many may be called « men of genius ». Not many works may be called « works of genius ». A man of genius is he who has creative, resolute flashes. Works of genius are those which really reveal something and make room for themselves in time and history with their crystal qualities. A man of genius, in order to be acknowledged as such, must be endowed with many many other accessory qualities completing him. So much so that I dare affirm that the real formula of the word « genius » is a synthesis full of intuitive flashes, of technical capacity, of unlimited patience, of resolving will and of insatiable penetrating power — of high tension and, at the same time, of serene calculating and controlling spirit, constantly coupled, pondered and bold.

The so-called flash of genius co-operates to a work of genius in the proportion of 1 to 1000; all the rest is study, patience, science, constancy, strength, resistance, sensibility, health of mind and body. I do not believe at all in improvising genius in itself, but I do believe in the good results of pondered thought and technique, in a hard, slow and complicated work of resolving and realizing toil. A lasting work of genius is the produce of a phosphorescent mind and of much, almost sanguine sweat, of inexorable unknown toil, weighed, borne, suffered and wanted with a mind and a fist of iron.

geometry

Modern art has enriched art with an interesting revealing definition: «geometrical splendour». Too simple deniers and shallow critics have accused and still obstinately accuse avanguard art of possessing geometrical sense and cold geometry.

Now I ask: what does the word «geometry» mean? For a young pupil of the elementary schools it means figures of all kinds: triangles, squares, parallelopipeds, cubes, cylinders and spheres. For a high School student the meaning takes on more complicated aspects: trigonometry, horthogonal projections, assonometry, difficult calculations of light refraction, of multiple sections, of arched bearings, of bridges, of dams and so on.

For a scientist and an astronomer it has a much more complex and mysterious meaning of unexplored matters and phenomenons, of distances and spaces, of hyperbolic astral worlds. For me, living in the world of artists, it means the fragile perfection of a flower, the miracle of a new-born child, the molecular and constructive structure of an insect, the calculated splendour of the machinery of a watch, the perfect splendour of a screw, of a pupil, of a lamp, the irradiation of light and the diffusion of sound, the ignition and the miracles of electrical phenomenons. All visual and sensual emotions, all technical expressions, all natural and scientific sights issue drawings and atmospheres of spacial geometrical magic.

Geometry, therefore, should not give grounds for criticism and the charge of triangulism which has been made against modern art can only be expressed by elementary, stuttering and unripe critics. The geometrical splendour of modern art is one of the first revealing elements for the creation of a new style. Refractions of lights and of metals, simultaneous perspectives — multiple and psychological, eccentric and concentric, theoretic revelations, interpreting and stylistic estimates have co-operated to the development of that phenomenon called «geometrical splendour».

Now try and follow me: does not music represent an inmost, clever calculation — intuitive and measured, mathematical and geometrical with sounds? Try to omit a few beats or even a few notes and, immediately, you will hear discordance and lack of equilibrium.

Does not the diamond appear to you as a crystallized geometrical nucleus of light?

Is not thought a well-balanced expression of crystal clearness? And you talk of childish triangulism! Every word must have its right, complete meaning. This is what I think of the word «geometry» in art and of the meaning of the «geometrical splendour» revealed by modernists.

open air painter and studio painter

I was told that a picture-maker said of me: «yes, Depero has talent, but it is a pity he does not paint in the open air». This is probably a common way of thinking for those who believe that the art problem can be solved only in front of a verist subject, be it internal or external, of objects, figures or landscapes. These people should ponder over the preceding chapter entitled «Understanding», including the following arguments: drawing, color, form, professional art, character, style and subject, in which I think I have given enough reasons to prove that a sitting of a few hours before a static subject is not sufficient to depict it with good brush-strokes, with good results of tonal skill, with a satisfying likeness and an effect of universal understanding. In my opinion, these people have a long way to go before reaching the work of art at which they aim.

The character of a work, its style, its creative and interpreting contents cannot be achieved only in front of nature, for they are the reward of study, of pondering, of meditation and of hard stylization at one's desk and easel. They are the results of deep thought, of tenacious stylistic toil with pencil and charcoal, of obstinate bettering and passionate manipulation of the fancied and composed subject. A work of art is not achieved through quick, superficial glances, but through endless cunning considerations, through the valuing of many problems which have been solved and plastically set together. It is not merely a manieristic, visual product; it is the results of introspective vision, a vision which has been architectonically pondered and suffered.

I am convinced that more time is required to think out a new work of art than to concrete it. The questions which should daily overwhelm an artists should be these: «Can I add something to what has already been revealed? Is my work the expression of my personality? Is it the child of my spiritual world? Does it possess formal and spiritual revealing contents?».

If one can answer these questions, if one is able to solve these problems, it is worth while continuing, struggling and fighting with the hope or the certainty of reaching one's goal; otherwise, it is better to have the courage of giving up everything and of leaving art to those who really understand it, to those who have it in their blood and in their brain, and this for one's conscience sake and for the right and good taste of the public.

questions and answers - reflexions and obligations of the artist of to-day - civilization and tradition

My dear friend, have you noticed that, over thirty years ago, a spiritual and material revolution, political and inventive, popular and social broke out in the whole world?

Have you noticed that our century has revealed new horizons, scientific discoveries and wonders of life, of research, of co-operation, of means, of constructive and ideological aspirations of all kinds? Do please listen and tell me whether you have wandered through the avenues, within the enclosures and in the rooms of great national, international and world exhibitions? For instance, have you visited exhibitions in Milan or Rome, in Venice, Berlin, Paris, Zurich, Budapest, Tokio, Chicago or New-York?

And have you never noticed any particular novelties, have you never realized the architectonic, pictorial, plastic, graphic or decorative problems that have already been solved or still await solution? Have you seen the large paintings having a bold and modern conception, do you know the sacred and prophane stained glass dedicated to the Church and to the Earth and the wonderfully carved wooden altars in which the light of Christ flows through the body of the believers? And what about those woven tapestries in which landscapes and figures are composed impressionistically, expressionistically, cubistically and futuristically? These are the works for which artists of every nation have worked with taste, with skill, with talent and with style in order to attain a new Art (with a capital A), fit for our times.

My dear friend, forgive me if I suddenly ask you a question which, apparently, has nothing to do with art. Tell me please: have you ever gone on a long journey? Have you ever stopped in a large harbour or in a huge international station where, under arcades and iron beams, among marbles, lights and metals, powerful locomotors come and go, booming and puffing? Where it is swarming with thousands of travellers among baggage, clothes and faces of every kind and every race? Have you ever walked along large city thoroughfares, bright with elegance and luxury, with their show-windows full of all kinds of things — art and fashions, food, sports and technique, products of an industrial epoch practical and intellectual material for grown-ups and for children, multicolored and plurimateric, interesting and fascinating?

Have you ever had the chance of visiting a shipbuilding yard, a metallurgic plant, a factory of machines, of engines, of 'planes- Have you ever seen an airport? Have you ever travelled by 'plane? Have you ever run in a motor-car or motor-cycle race? Have you ever penetrated in the heart of a central station, of a telephonic or radiotransmitting station? Have you ever visited a chemical, physical, surgical laboratory?Answer yes or no and then I shall tell you the reason for my questions.

By chance or by luck, my dear friend, restlessly aspiring to art and glory, have you ever frequented the great theatres of international

fame with their revolving stages, simultaneous and mechanical, on which scenography, costumes, ballet teams, astounding performances, lighting and international scenotechnical talent has revealed phantasies and art creations of genial and imposing complexity and variety? Tell me truly: have you been there, have they made you think, do you know them?

Please tell me, have you heard of the revolution of the theatre which was experimented and achieved, conceived and planned by Italians, by Germans, by the French, the Spanish, the Japanese and, most of all, by Russians and Americans in every lyrical-scenotechnical-cinematographic-musical section?

My dear young man, you who present yourself on the platform of modern art, have you ever taken any interest in the artistic movements which were born in the whole world, revealing struggles and theories which were not always considerable and talented but always interesting and of noble and sincere intention? The intention of adding something to art, a personal voice, a light, a new path, wider fields, the intention of finding a new way leading to the art of to-morrow.

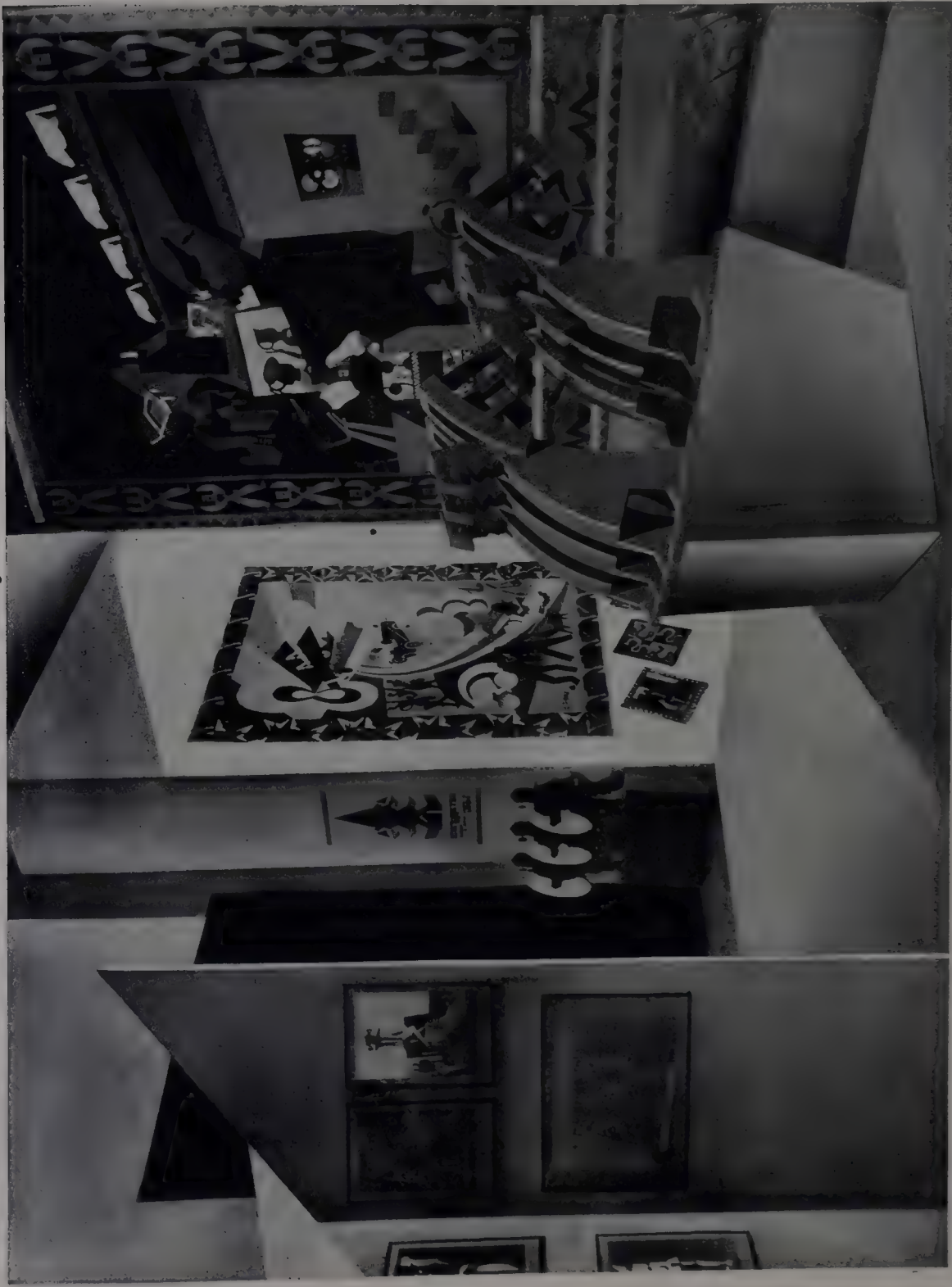
This art has not been completely achieved. It has not yet been completely revealed, but it is so universally coveted and felt that it will be fatally and victoriously conquered. Do not forget that the battle of art marches along with the battle of ideas and of science.

a) „isms“

My good listener, do you recall all those people sick with critic habit, with disparaging itch and with acid pessimism, do you recall all the poison and the torrent of words falling on all tendencies ending in «ism»? Against impressionism, against realism, cubism, futurism, novecentism, rationalism and all their many derivations? Do you remember or not?

Well, my dear friend, are you really sure that all these «isms» that were so ill-treated and mocked and that, in the end, have given humanity so much new faith, so much courage, so much art and civilization, so many names and talents, in brief, so much history, are you really sure they contain no important meanings?

My patient listener, it is true that all these «isms» which represent many fine and holy battles and which have generated so many honourable works have also caused the growth of an inevitable mass of amateurs, of mediocrities, of nullities and of revolting monkeys. Because it is fatal that, in every time and in every field, profeteers, plagiarists, forgers and stutterers should sprout out to infect the air.

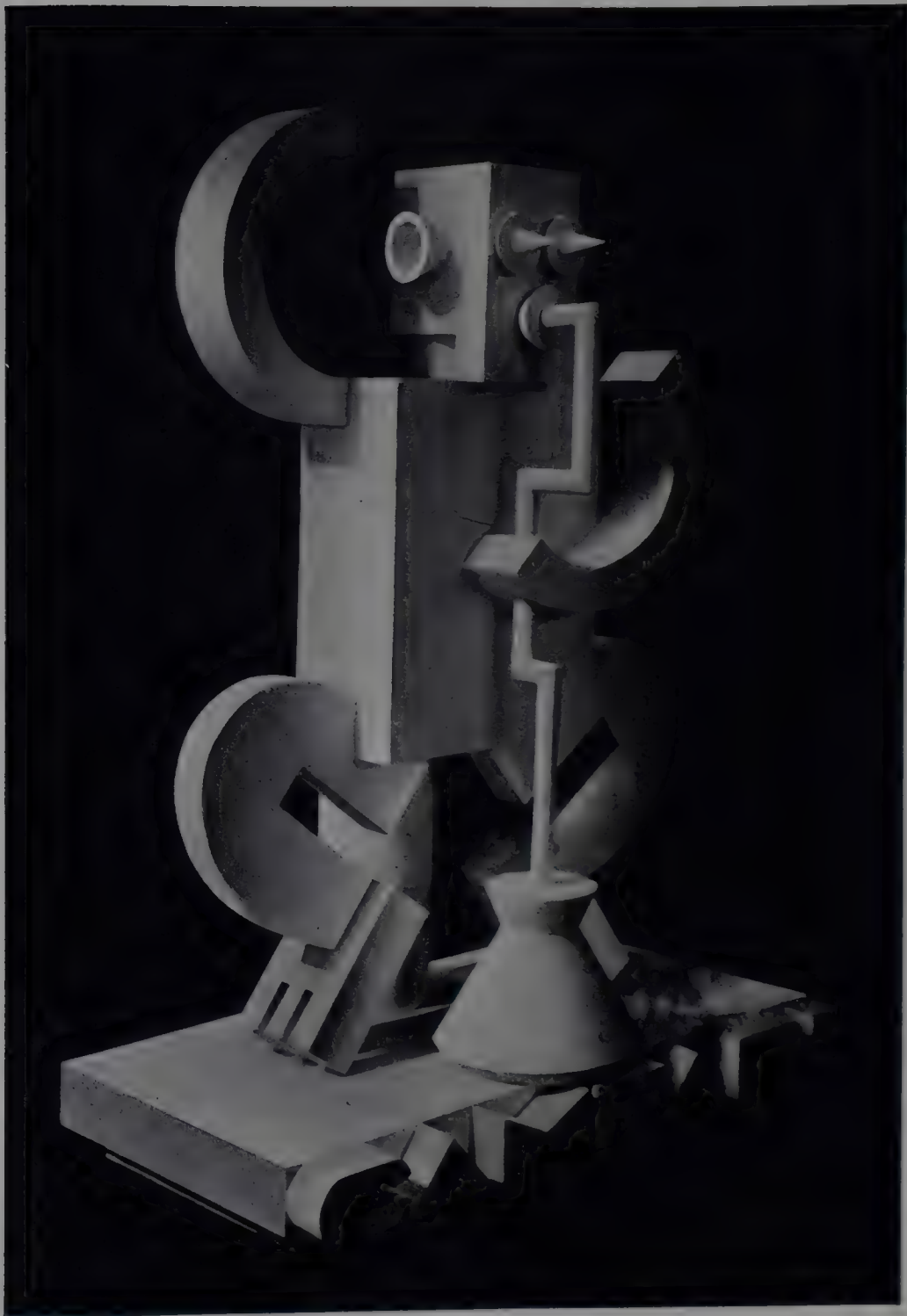


section d'epave - grand palais - international exhibition of decorative art - paris 1925



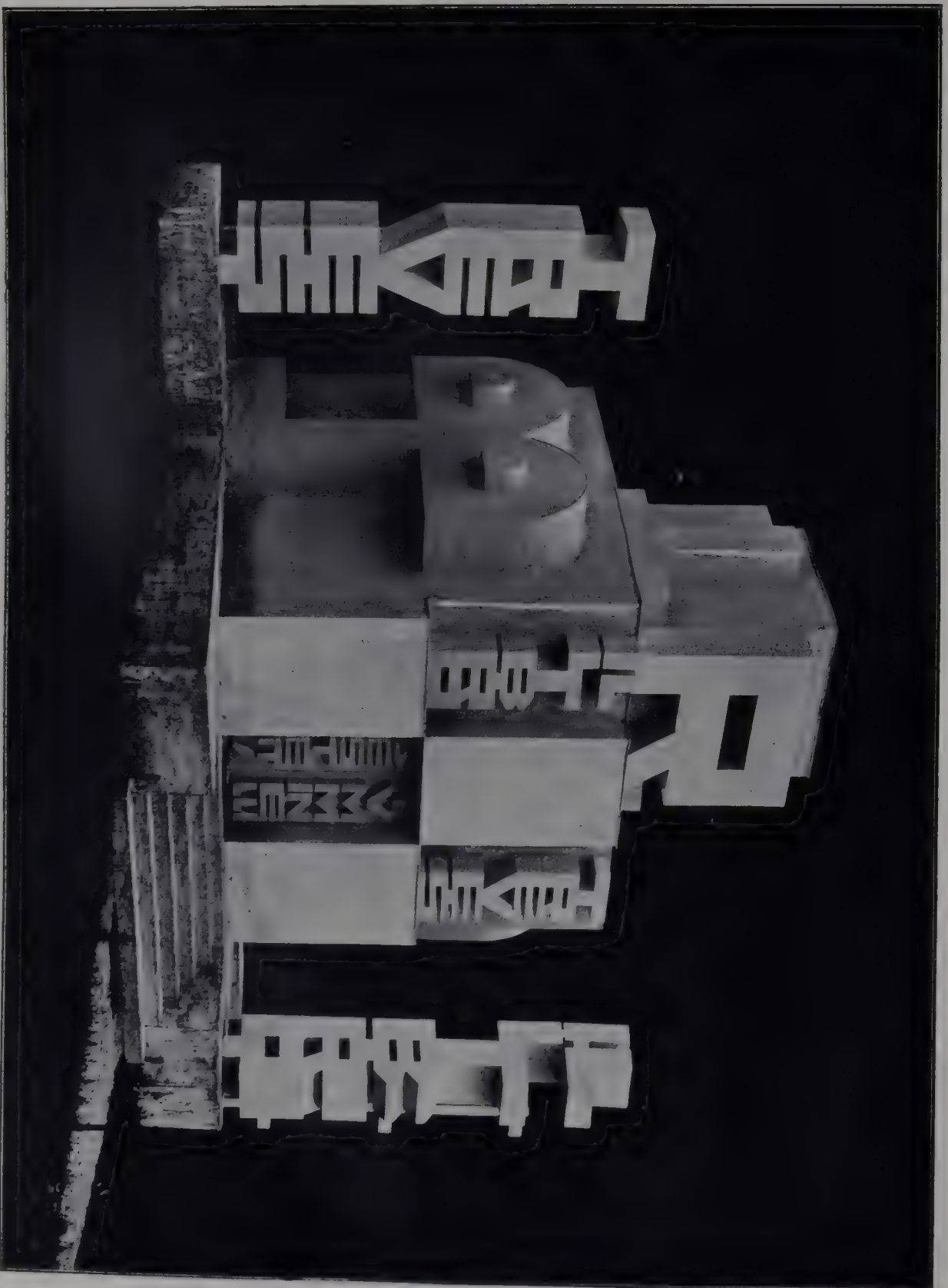
plastic in wood - paris 1925

f. depero



L. depero

plastic in wood - paris 1925



book pavilion · example of typographic architecture constructed for the publishing-house bastetti, tumminelli and treves, at the third triennial of milan 1927
depero architect

So you think that all these «isms» which have produced glorious names in the nineteenth century and in this century, you think that these ascensional movements, these milestones, investigations, tendencies and conclusions can teach nothing to us who are the children of this new, wonderful century, of these dramatic, heroic and genial times?

b) „civilization“

Think of the wonderful efforts and of the genial documentations which shine in modern art galleries and in precious and intelligent private collections both in Italy and abroad: these works prove the position reached by art on the scale of feeling, of capacity, of daring, of color, of sound, of poetry, of form, of style, of statics, of dynamics, of analysis and of synthesis, of physics and of metaphysics, of reality and of abstraction. Do you really think there is no teaching in them, do you think that these investigations and solutions of artists of fertile talent should not help us to advance and to concrete more and more worthy and complex works, corresponding consciously, boldly, nobly and rightly to the splendour of our life, to the heroism of our battles, to the pallet of our customs, to the height of our civilization?

Do you believe, my good friend, that the spirit, the education, the emotion, the feelings, the brains, the intuition, the sight, the sensibility of the artist and the intelligence of the painter, of the poet of the architect of to-day can have ignored and overlooked the modernity of our civilization and the warmth of our passions and of our violent and peaceful struggles? Do you think they have not been moved by the eruptive dynamism of our harbours, of our stations, of our dock-yards and cities which were the front of our war? Are you really certain that the immense vision of sorrows, of joys, of anxiety, of battles, of human and superhuman aerial, earthly and submarine power, of flesh, of fire and of metal, of heroes and of machines, of muscles and of calculations, of nations and of races, are you really sure, I ask, that all this cannot interest art and the new artist of this twentieth century full of civilization?

Do not be offended, my dear friend, if I honestly say that two fish on a dish, three apples in a basket, four brush-strokes on a painting of 30 cm. x 40 jotted down quickly and impatiently, without drawing and substance of form and of conception, cannot represent works worthy of an artist of to-day.

Do you really think, my dear painters of portraits, of nudes, my loving depictees of fish, of pipes, of apples and pears, that this fine or ugly world of yours, eatable and palpable, be sufficient and consciously able to serve worthily and substantially modern art and to

satisfy our century which is so different, strongly eruptive, pugnacious and explosive, violently destroying and wonderfully reconstructing?

c) „tradition“

My patient reader, allow me to continue. You often quote the word «tradition», right and healthy tradition. Well, yes, it really has a great meaning, and deep, inwardly inciting educative contents. This meaning and these contents are, for me, simply revolutionary. Segantini was a revolutionary and Leonardo was the master of revolutions.... and again, following the centuries up to Signorini, Fattori, Previati, Spadini, Balla, Boccioni, Carrà, Severini, Dechirico, Terragni, Depero and Prampolini.... and I could mention an unlimited number of names. Thus, in order to be in the heart of tradition, that is, in order to advance on the hard way of tradition one must be a revolutionary. But do not misunderstand me: there is no deed of destroying anything and of disparaging anybody, as many might wrongly think: one must only try to discover and to enrich art with something new which has not yet been experimented. And may this discovery be a concluding experiment in color, in form, in style, in a new and personal style, like good, crusty bread for our hunger of twentieth century, future art!

All the artists of the past who conquered a place in history (owing to real genius, to the foundation of Schools, to their having given their name to a tendency or an epoch, or simply as myths) are always contrasting, since each one of these milestones and of these lights revealed a world of its own, a personal tendency and poetry, a personal stylistic, mystical and ideological atmosphere, an unmistakable character. Revealing and revolutionary names, works and epochs.

The sacred and profane works of art having fantastic or realistic character, warlike or peaceful, historical or mystical, popular and spectacular which we may see in cathedrals, in churches in picture galleries, in the ruins of buried towns, in antiquarian shops of all the world, in Indian pagodas, in Egyptian Pyramids and in Oriental temples, show and reveal creative and representative greatness, visionary plastic and stylistic power, the immense work of a multitude of active brains and arms. Nothing is improvised. Nothing is sketched. Nothing is approximate. Nothing is monotonous, limited, bound, uncertain, modest. We see paintings, frescoes, reliefs and statues, architectures and richly drawn figurative decorativism, cleverly painted, skilfully moulded, consciously and boldly stylized with the unmistakable character of a style and of an epoch.

Divinity, religion, faith, miracles, mystical visions, historical facts; battles, shipwrecks, hunting, dances, feasts, landscapes and sea-sca-

pes and, if you like, also «still lives»; earthly and heavenly paradise, the hell and purgatory of devils and witches, stories and tales, legends and customs, songs and symphonies, in short, all the representative power of a nation, of an epoch, of a cycle mean: strength, riches, toil, character, faith, fatherland, trade activity, brains and genius. This is what is contained in the past of every nation, of every people, from Latin to Germanic, from Japanese to Indian, from Egyptian to Negro, from Mexican to Russian and so on.

Well, my dear artist, so I should wish our twentieth century, avant-garde style to be. With as much riches, with as much style, with as much boldness, with as much sincere courage for our times, with as much true love for our customs, with as much passionate enthusiasm for our color, for our light, for the endless means which have been created by us and which reveal new beauty, new emotional splendour. Love and enthusiasm for our times.

We must open our eyes on the past. We must open our eyes and ears on the present. We must cast our mind and brain into the future. We must face manly tasks and face them like men.

My dear friend, we have new towns to enrich, we have towns to rebuild and embellish with our new art. There is an immense tomorrow waiting for us. We must think of new vessels to be launched, of new theatres to revive with vivifying melodrama e scenotechnique. We have new churches to erect and to light up again with renewed faith; we have God to thank with our colors, our forms, our glorifications. We have to complete rationally ideated architecture and to integrate it with our great renewed painting, with our plastic and decorations, tending and striving towards stylistically complete creation.

rythm

Rythm means dance, that is, a sequence of harmonious gestures. Rythm means music, that is, sequence and harmony of colors, of intonations, accord of sweetness, of violence and of contrast. Rythm means magic geometry. Rythm means the alternating cadence of motifs which have been gradually placed in a certain order, harmonious to the senses and to the spirit. Rythm, pictorially speaking, means the succession of hardness and transparency alternating and completing each other and harmonically cooperating to the integral unity of the work. He who does not feel rythm cannot understand drawing, pictorial sensibility, plastic continuity, architectonic organicity. Rythm is the music of instinct. Lines and brush-strokes dance on the tip of the brush and of the pencil as the rythm of a mimic and of a dancer vibrates on the tip of their toes. Rythm is a musical writing, a writing of gestures, of curves, of corners, of cuts, of convexities, of turnings, of folds, of nervures, of ondulations, of lights and

of shadows told and represented with the taste of an inspired musician and the delicacy of a poet. Rythm is, indeed, the poetry of lines, the song of color, the passion of form. It is the sense of rythm which immediately shows whether a work is art or not. Real works of art are such, thanks to their rythmical contents. They speak their own language with sweet or violent rythm, at a tempo of harmonious dawn or of stormy sunset, at a dumb tempo of horizontal peace or at an asymmetric, earth-quake tempo of battle and, again, with the apocalyptic rythm of dramas and catastrophes. Always, a work of art lies on a rythmic scale of mass and of details. The secret of style lies in rythm. Chinese, Arab, Indian, Egyptian style, the « quattrocento », the renaissance, the « Empire » style, the popular art of every country contain a rythmic language of their own. And in rythm is enclosed the secret of one's originality of interpretation.

Sequel of harmonic lines, of harmonic colors, of harmonic forms and of antipretty, syncopated, expressive disharmonies. Intelligent and inspired order of taste and style.

statics

In the plastic language, statics means, first of all, the condition owing to which each figure stands in its volumes with order and balance. The figure may be a resting or moving person, an object or instrument seen in its outward appearance, apparent and discomposed in its plastic values, and also a merely fantastic invention, but it must be depicted in its architectonic lines and forms: with full and empty spaces, lights and shadows and its whole must essentially obey to the fundamental condition of statics.

When speaking of a plant, I mean it to be statically well rooted, with trunk, branches, leaves and masses of foliage, with fruit and flowers characterized in their own structure and tonality.

When speaking of a house or of any architectonic object, I mean them to be rendered with their thickness and perspectives, with their outward and inward values: facades, roofs, points, terraces and flowers, floors, ceilings, beams, arcades, attics, cellars and special plants, projected and valued with rythmic and true order.

In paintings of still life, besides pictorial valuing and contents of tonal sensuality, I am interested in static and constructive synthesis and analysis: objects, flowers and fruit, materials and so on must be represented with accurate static cohesion.

In plastic representations, the static condition is the axis of the conception, the principal element from which the composition must develop. Therefore, « static » does not mean inert, dead, without expression: when I say static I mean « straight, well constructed and clearly expressed ». I quite agree with the motto which says: « that which is not static is not dynamic and that which is not dynamic is not

static». For it is true that machines, which we dynamic modernists praise and love, are perfectly static, and a good thing too, for what would happen if they were not balanced? The word «machine» means, first of all, something having a substance of equilibrium, of calculation and of reasoning. The word «machine» is a phenomenon of order and organicity.

Then, the work of art is an exquisite expression of harmony, a hard task of selection, a refined expression of taste in which there is perfect balance of colors and forms, of lines and volumes, of harmonies and contrasts and for the attainment of which the artist must be able to place and to dose with static conscience and capacity.

Not only bright, singing colors irradiate, but also heavy, dark colors — in volumes, in blocks, well constructed. Not only bold, discomposed perspectives, but also realistic, demonstrative perspectives. Not only forms of abstract forces but also irrefutable forms of realism and of anatomy.

In statics lies the last secret of plastic organism and of pictorial composition. The dynamic artists who deny the value of statics are as reckless as those other artists who deny dynamism. For, also dynamics is nothing but an organic harmony of meticulously and scrupulously interdependent elements: elements and functions promoting unity and life. If you cut off one leg from a four-legged chair, it can no longer stand; if you take off a wheel from a four-wheeled cart, it can no longer go. Thus a realistic plastic expression or an expression of interpreted reality cannot plastically stand if their plastic contents have not been wisely weighed, constructed and planted. Static elements must cooperate to the unity and integration of the work in the same proportion of dynamic elements, since both contribute to the common propulsory and expressive aim.

All unnecessary elements, discomposed without judgement, manually composed, unscrupulously out of tune or superficially suitable, all fictitious elements added without intelligence, purpose or meaning, all mannerisms crammed in through inexperience and incapacity, contribute to the failure of the work, for they are antistatic and antidynamic elements, that is, antiexpressive elements.

He who does not study, or feel, understand and use static values, cannot understand and use dynamic values. The magic spark of expressiveness comes from the successful coupling of the two contrasting senses of statics and dynamics. He who does not understand and study a mountain, a tree, a stone, cannot appreciate a flowing torrent and understand a galloping horse and a fast car. He who does not study and understand the anatomy of a face, of a limb, the analytic intricacy of muscles, of the branches of a tree, the wonders of a pupil, cannot understand the synthetic beauty of an engine, of a gearing, of an apparatus of levers and pulleys. The musical and plastic, static and dynamic, analytic and synthetic beauty of a moun-

tain is also enclosed in a stone, in a flower and even in a ray of light containing the magic static and geometrical splendour of a faceted crystal with its star-like and diamond-like points and areas, corners and definite radii and vertexes.

subject and style

I have just said that, in many art exhibitions I visited, I found careless drawing, pale, dull and dead colors and flat, unclear forms; now I add that even the subject is often rather common and childish. I noticed a prevalence of «still life»: pipes, pears, apples, fish and many other insignificant objects. I have painted many of them myself, in my early days and therefore I admit that from «still life» a painter can obtain an intelligent and expressive interpretation of planes, of tones, of volumes and shadings; but, in my opinion, a solid artist must not forget his manly task of composer, able to depict a lofty vision, a lyrical force or a deeply lived tale of an emotional drama or of a problem confirming his talent and justifying a work of art.

A still life may have the function of completing a picture, of enriching it with details, it may be a study or an essay, but it can never be a highly significative painting. In almost all art exhibitions, even in the best organized national and foreign ones, open to all expressions, both traditional and ultramodern, I have noticed an exaggerated number of «still lives», poor in technique and composition and revealing a limited brain and a lack of originality and fancy. These paintings are also the symptoms and the alarming signs of complete blindness in front of the surrounding world. Being anxious to give a realistic and communicative value to their work (a laudable intention) and wishing to stick to tradition (another laudable intention), many artists fall to flat conventionalism and to guilty oleography. In my opinion, tradition, museums and the masters of the past should teach that subject is of capital importance and that the task of composition and of creation is the task in which an artist reveals himself. One should compose with all that life offers and with all that one acquires through experience; and open one's eyes on our streets, our squares, our houses, our race-tracks and our factories. Here are the subjects and the elements which should be chosen in order to compose beyond «still lives» and beyond copies of flat tradition and in order to create works of modernity and of historical up-to-date reality, of integrating revealing contents.

When people tell me that, for an artist, the subject is not very important, I answer that this is not quite true. It is true that, before facing a subject, one must possess a style, but I must add that as long as artists will draw their inspirations from trite subjects which have

been used for centuries, they will hardly be able to find a new line, an unseen color, a revealing form. Therefore, I think that only by facing modern subjects it will be possible to attain a style suitable to our times. To paint and to be inspired by all that surrounds us, by modernity leading us on, is not, in my opinion, a crime of esthetics and of taste, but an example of sincerity and courage. Speed, mechanics, science, sports, evolution and competition in every field are not elements that an artist must ignore. For they reveal graphic, pictorial and plastic values, unknown landscapes and problems.

Geometry has taught man to dissect bodies, to measure and multiply projections, to consult the inward and outward areas of bodies and of things; in short, it has revealed planimetric, simultaneous and multiple valuing. Physics have analysed the dynamic values of reality and chemistry has defined contents and decomposed substances, matter, saps and every phenomenon of the perennial transformation, decomposition and rebirth of things. Mechanics have intensified and multiplied life. Electricity has revived light and centuplicated movement and the centres of motor irradiation; surgery has dissected human and animal bodies, revealing them to all and analysing them in their structure and functions. All these scientific vibrations, revelations and conquests have struck the sensitive soul of the artist and have urged him on to a deeper, searching and moving vision of reality. The artist who is tied to the art of yesterday has stopped on the surface of the old subject, while the dynamic modernist of to-day is attracted onto the way of the future, towards new skies revealing new aims, and penetrates subjects of a new kind.

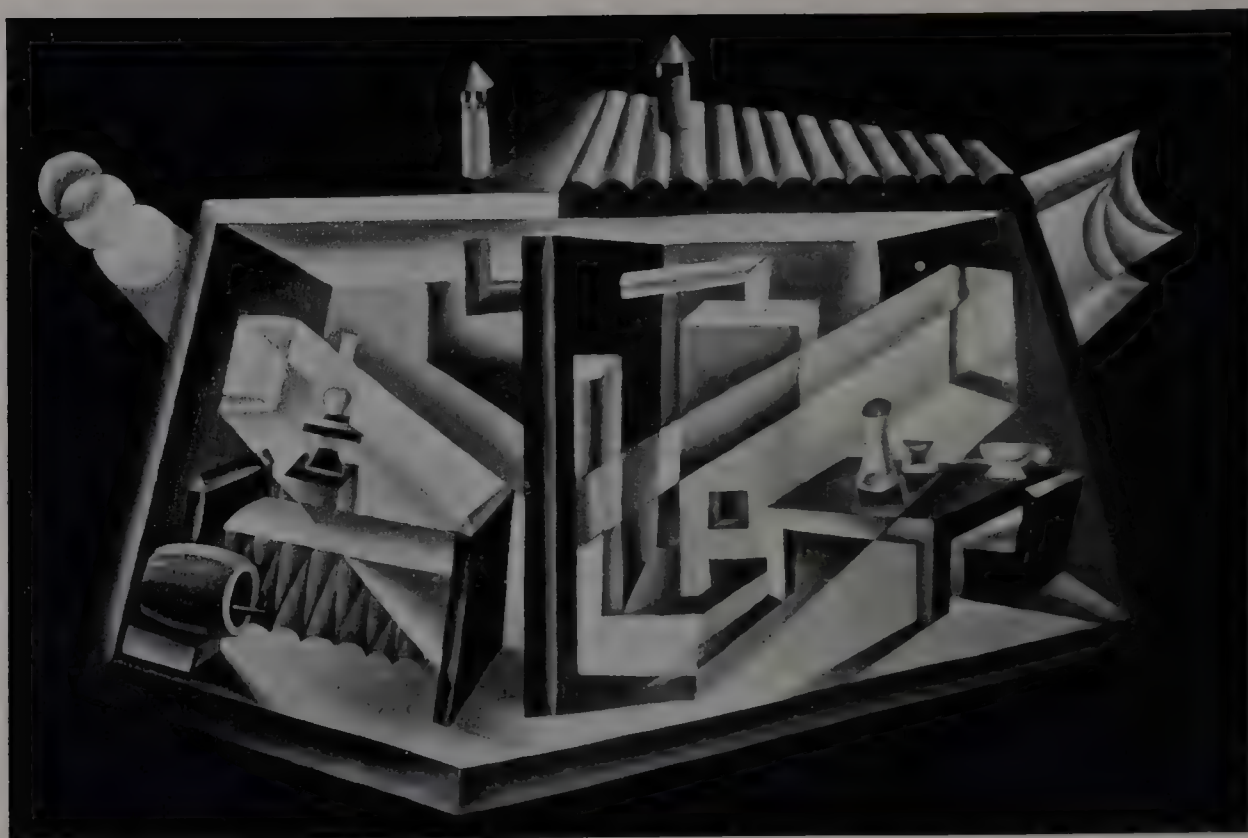
The theories and the thousands of works of avanguard artists in the whole world are not useless efforts of the brain or utopistic expressions or programmes; they are clever and passionate investigations, undeniable aspirations and conquests.

In art there are unlimited laws theories and technical and spiritual programmes. I believe that art is also a complex science full of problems. The great masters of the past created their personal schools. Music, for instance, as I have already said, is a high calculation of harmonies, a complicated arithmetic of sounds. As also poetry is a lofty measuring of images and words.

Also painting and plastic are chromatic, volumetric expressions of wisdom and science. Just as architecture is a masterly equilibrium between statics and dynamics, and style is the hard reward of experience, thought and meditation. Therefore I do not consider art as an impenetrable mystery, nor do I consider it as simple realistic imitation of colorless, childish and amorphous impulse. If the artist possesses a pure soul, spontaneous intuition and passionate violence, he should not lack will power, intelligence, conscience and science in order to achieve solid, intense work, lofty in form and contents, that is, in subject and in style, the essence of a work of art.

town and country partisanship

On these two principles, these two ways of seeing, of understanding, of considering and of living, there have been many words and discussions and, in my opinion, also much misunderstanding. There is the town partisan who preaches and exalts the dynamism of show-windows, of night-clubs, of vaudeville theatres, of machines, of smart fashionable women and the splendour of metropolitan lights. He praises business, dock-yards, feverish concurrence, banks, the performances of circuses, the vision of sport-fields and so on..... everything which the big city offers in its streets, its stages, its houses and its life. These aspects, problems, customs and performances cannot be denied: they may be fine or ugly, but they are always expressive, full of character, of teaching and also of elevating, inciting attraction: examples of marching life, of conquering manhood, of evolution of civilization. There is nothing to object and I approve unconditionally. But, on the opposite bank, there is the country artist, the primitive and wild artist who lives in a provincial town or, perhaps, in a mountain village, or on the shores of a lake, or among lonely rocks corroded and beaten by the green young waters of sea storms. He is a misanthropic artist who sings the praises of simple and natural life, of solitude, of the elementary way of living, of the peasant and of the fisherman. His favourite themes are: «the sower»; «the vintage»; «ploughing»; «the mower». Feasting and working peasants. The eternal beauty of mountains, fields and gulfs in the changeable charm of the different seasons. This artist describes and depicts cows at the water-trough, grazing horses, the return of sheep to the fold — objects of natural peace and of country life. This he exalts, defends and sings with sincere poetry, with spontaneous deep meditation, with primitive and pure words worthy of a real poet. He also is right; there is nothing to object and I approve unconditionally. Therefore, both are right, since both are true. They follow the two realities of life, that is, nature and civilization. There is no need of discussing, of printing manifests and even of founding newspapers and magazines in order to fight, to disparage, to defame and to undervalue one of these two currents with the results of troubling public opinion and public and artistic taste. Both town art and country art are healthy and worthy if they are expressed with sincerity by real, able artists. In my opinion it does not matter whether the subject is a sower or a motor-cyclist: it is all the same to art. A sower and a fisherman in their true human aspects are as true to life and to their symbols as a motor-cyclist, a cyclist and a race-runner. They also are flesh and bone men, men with human functions, typical examples of active humanity, symbolic representatives of civilization. I mentioned these instances out of thousands. The important thing is that both town artists and country artists must be en-



f. depierre

lunar prisms - (oil 1932) property gallery of modern art - rome



neighing in speed • (oil 1932) property della ragione • genoa

f. depero



f. depero

elasticity of cats - (oil 1932) property gallery of modern art - baltimore - u. s. a.



cock - (oil 1933) property art gallery of rovereto - trentino - italy

f. depero

dowed with talent, with brains and faculties and with real capacity. For, in this case, either of them, both in town and in the country, in every surrounding, will be able to find really inspired and revealing motifs, problems and conceptions. In a piece of meadow, in a forest corner, in a bed of flowers, in a spot of sky, in a country scene, there can be as many problems of light, of form and of plastic dynamism as in a metropolitan street, in a dock-yard, in a fashionable theatre. Both are on the pedestal of truth, both are on the high-road, provided there be talent in their minds, honesty of feeling and originality of expression in their heart and representative skill in their hands. The real artist is able to squeeze out a work from every corner of nature and of life. But when an artist crystallizes himself in one principle and stops on compulsory formulas, on didactic and polemic programmes, he fatally shuts himself within a circle.

I take the liberty of dedicating these thoughts of mine both to obstinate town partisans and to obstinate country partisans, since I like and admire both when they are endowed with qualities which are necessary to an artist. On the other hand, if these so-called town and country artists do not possess these qualities of trade, of taste, of talent, of temperament and of capacity, it does not matter whether they be country or town artists, objective or abstract, physic or metaphysical, static or dynamic artists for they will always be unimportant mediocrities.

„bottle“

Even a simple bottle contains and spreads out a plastic life of its own. It may appear suspended in space, in the open rectangle of a door, as an unexpected gift. It then appears sectioned, that is, with its seen and known values. Green inside, blue outside. The light comes out of the crystal with sharp thorns. Sometimes the bottle is white, light, almost floating and sometimes it is heavy, of stone, or massive, of dull cast iron, suspended on the abyss of deep shadows. From its cylindrical stomach, the profiles of reflected figures bloom like buds, leaves and petals. Within its glassy body, you see the reflection of your oblong and shining figure — laughing, comical or tragic. The bottle absorbs the lights, objects and figures which surround it. In magic painting, these contents take a body and are vivified with their own life, with plastic independence. Unreal values dominate over real ones. The mysterious language of the intimacies of color, of heat, of sound, of refraction, of weight, of likes and dislikes has acquired relief and evidence. The bottle is reborn. It has dressed itself with the colors falling on it: with blue wings of sky, with yellow cloaks of flame, showing the liquid body of its ruddy-gold or mint-green contents. The clear, silvery voice of water glimmers from its polished throat. Red and violet eruptions

sprout from its round mouth. Its bleak old image has disappeared. The new bottle turns and jumps at a rythm of jazz; it radiates flashes and phosphorescences. The brush has stolen from the rainbow lights of gold, rays of agate, violet and foaming, and the bottle enjoys in expressive freedom the happiness of its renovated aspect. Free values move in space, apparently illogical, but co-ordinated within the emotional order of wonder.

cup of white wine

My dear reader, now I have bored you with my theories, do sit down beside me and drink a cup of this excellent « Albana ». Drink it and admire it also in its golden splendour, besides enjoying its taste. And after having listened to this short pictorial piece of mine, tell me if this wine does not seem even more delicious to you.

Liquid sun in a glass. The blonde, rectilineal light fills the crystal cup. The hair of the lamps shines around the transparent face of the cup and the small, square, blue pupils of the windows are clearly reflected on starry miniature skies. The lips of its edge are seducing and the manly will of not going near them begins to fail. Transparencies of agate. Feminine pallor reflected in the waters of a lake, near the lukewarm sands, among the ever changing scarves of golden foams kissing the sunny shore. Its loving language sings to the sun the song of ripe harvests and moves the yellow pages of the wheat, tossing in the wind in a bacchic dance.

Feeling of high shining grass, of large daisy petals, folds of clouds, curls of waves, among murmurs of leaves and white shivers of small clouds in the sky, blown by midday breezes.

Feeling of heat, of gold, of brass, of rings, of wedding chains and ear-drops. Feeling of dear memories of past days and purple of golden frames; feeling of pollen, of the flight of bees, of spread honey, of hot metals and of precious woods. Aristocratic penetrating color. This is the mood given me by this piece of crystallized white wine before me, which is looking at me with its single eye — bare, sweet and treacherous like a Liliputian lake in which I drive in the fishing rod of my sensitive gaze in search of those small sharp fish of light, happily frisking.

To your edges, to your lips of glass, I abandon my floating spirit, my passion, with sweet thoughts of happy youth.

Gentle sweetness of squeezed grapes born on the loved Mediterranean hills —

Where the icy snows do not exist —

Where the flame of the Tropics does not burn —

Where the fury of winds does not mow —

Where the tragidy of tempests does not strike —

Where the crash of storms does not break out.
Where only the song of love and the waving line of happiness are masters.
This is the spiritual landscape emanating from a simple cup of white wine.
And now let me toast to your health and let us go back to our patient artistic toil.

wines

My dear artist, if you wish your patient reader to listen to you to the end, offer him another bit of rest and, may be, another cup of white wine.
All right. But I have a good collection of wines. Choose among them and hear how, some time ago, four of my thirsty guests poetically expressed their wish:

The first thirsty guest said:

I want some dry wine. Red — clear — with ruby transparencies.
When I bring the glass near to my lips, a perfumed glow shall give me a slight intoxication.
To my palate it shall taste quiet, flowing and quenching.
It shall glide in my throat like a crystal waterfall of intimate peace and of silent poetry.
Through its reflections I shall see the slender line of its thin waist.
Clear, ruddy like a filtered strawberry, with azure veins of pure alpine air.
A preparatory wine adolescent and spring-like, giving me a feeling of internal cleanliness, of healthy currying to the muscles and a slight optimistic glow.

The second thirsty guest said:

« I want a thick wine, round, mellow, nourishing and full. A wine telling me everything; not sweet, but sound and sonorous.
« A wine of good stock, ripe and manly, square of body, rolling of voice, ruddy of color, almost frowning, with a deep gaze.
« When it writes on the table-cloth, it must be black and strongly affirmative. Its poured out stain shall have clear contours, without watery slabberings. In my throat it shall fall as food, as a slice of liquid meat.
« Its perfume, having a small power of expansion, shall be full and intense. A wine of the South, with a tanned face, solar nerves, a strong fist, a high degree, a passionate voice.
« A wine head over heels in love.

The third thirsty quest said :

« I want it golden colored. Mellow to the palate, sugary to the throat. A wine singing the sunny vines of the Apennine hills, of the Roman hills and of summer gulfs.

« It is not really white; its real color is between gold and copper, with stripes of brass, pupils of old gold and glances of new gold.

« It shall spread on my tongue as oil and fall in my throat as velvet.

« It shall look like a bottled sun. Aroma of ripe peach — strength of liquor — fluidity of Titian head.

« It shall warmly fill my mouth with flaming intimacy. As soon as it is drunk, it shall transform blood into solar gold and veins shall radiate phosphorescent light, giving a feeling of beatitude.

« I want its hands warm, like the fever of love. Its word turgid and arrogant. Its lips of hard flesh, swollen with almost lustful juice.

And, lastly, the fourth thirsty guest said :

« My tastes are quite different.

« I am a metropolitan night-bird. I want wine: neither solid nor dark, neither light nor golden, neither sweet nor « passito », neither Titian nor ruby-colored. I want foaming wine in evening dress, silvery, sparkling.

« Beginning its echoing song, when uncorked, with a pistol shot. With a vertical dry explosion towards the ceiling.

« As proud as the whistle of a steam locomotive, bearing on its head a large tuft of foam in high uniform.

« A cuirassier wine.

« A wine recalling limes, lemons, oranges and sea foams mingled with beautiful white teeth and sparkling laughter of nocturnal joy.

« Transparencies of bare shoulders, reflections of alabaster, hands of wax covered with rings: Paris, San Remo, Montecarlo, roulette, eyes of electric bulbs, dollars and rockets of fireworks.

« Toasts, decorations, victories, christenings, ceremonies, brassbands, bottles taken by the neck and killed against the sharp nose of prows, music on board hooters and jazz in night-clubs.

« Uncorked joy — iridescent fountain of happiness...

« Garçon —

Champagne!

(Lyric belonging to the wine Firm Forlonari Bros-Brescia) And now choose. A toast to your health and let us go back to our patient toil.

in 1927 i wrote

a piece entitled « the necessity of self-advertisement » To-day, after twenty years, I feel neither shame nor immodesty in republishing it, for I am still convinced that if an artist does not try to help

himself and to make way for his art with his own elbows, he has no other hope but that of starving to death as a miserable beggar. This is all the more true in these very hard after-war times.

I copy the piece as it is, without changing one word. It says: «Self-advertisement is not a vain, useless or exaggerated expression of megalomania, but an absolute necessity in order to let the public know one's ideas and creations. In every field of production, excepted that of Art, the loudest advertisements are allowed and tolerated; every business man can and does send out the boldest publicity for his products. Only for us who are the producers of talented works of beauty and of art, publicity is considered an abnormal expression, an eagerness for success, an impudent immodesty. We must do away with this custom of acknowledging an artist after his death or in his old age. An artist has the right and need of being acknowledged, valued and glorified during his life and he has, therefore, the right of using all the most effective and unheard-of means as publicity to his own genius and to his own works. The first and foremost critic of a work of art is the artist who created it. Give him every means to illustrate it and make it known. If an artist awaits celebrity or gratefulness for his work through other people, he will have the time to die a thousand times for sheer hunger».

To-day, 1947, exactly twenty years after, I have not changed my mind. I could tell you here the names of many modern artists (for I don't know the real story of the artists of the past) who starved to death, owing to barbarious negligence.

Umberto Boccioni in his volume: «Platic Dynamism» — 1911, wrote: «Are they not still alive, do they not still walk undisturbed along the streets, do they not still sit in committees and juries those who have caused the suicide of Pelizza da Volpedo, the flight abroad of Medardo Rosi and who have raised a wall of silence around Previati? Who will ever think of killing them, of getting rid of them?».

Words of fire, but holy and moving words of U. Boccioni, another great artist now forgotten by his own country but considered abroad a great master of this century.

johnny and the armadillo that is «A psychological portrait»

We are in Milan at my personal Show at the «Camino» Gallery - Via Montenapoleone - March 1946. The «Araldo dell'Arte» has announced: «great name and great interest..... the last production of this artist who is more and more strenghtening a clear and decided personalityand so on. My dear «Araldo», I thank you for your flattering words.

A gentleman stops in front of a painting and asks me to illustrate the title: «Johnny and the armadillo».

I explain: it is the psychological portrait of a friend and admirer of mine. On his left arm he holds an armadillo. The right arm is bent upwards in the act of offering a lighted match. From the curve of the arm some orange lilies are sprouting, standing out like flames against a yellow curtain. The trunk of the figure rises from the shining plane of a table of black crystal.

« But why, the gentleman asks me, why did you put an armadillo on his arm? ».

To show his kindness. Animals are loved by good and sensitive people. My dear friend is really good natured and kind and, at the same time, he is fond of original things; therefore I put on his arm a strange animal: the armadillo.

« And why the swollen face and the hard blue and violet hair? ».

The writer, critic and old friend Orio Vergani is standing at my side. He answers the question with this well-found definition: « Because Depero's paintings are mosaics of volumes and of plastic values ». Indeed, this definition explains and specifies my anti-impressionistic painting, a painting of solidities and of rhythmically co-ordinated volumes.

I painted my friend in his essential qualities, in one of his habitual gestures (he is always offering and lighting cigarettes to everybody!). I synthetised these elements in a modern setting because he is an enthusiastic lover of all that is modern.

In my book: « DEPERO 1937 », I spoke for the first time of « psychological portraits ». I then said that, with a psychological portrait, I do not intend to depict the physical appearance of a person, but his inward countenance, that is, his character, his temperament, his essential lines, the atmosphere in which he feels at ease, the setting which surrounds him, the intimate worries tormenting him.

I also said that two persons may be alike physically and quite different psychologically. For instance:

An Engineer: cold, rigid, materialistic, his mind always occupied with mathematic calculations, set within a mechanical atmosphere of buildings and frame-works, is quite different from

a Musician: a dreamer, restless, too sensitive and always living in unreal and abstract atmospheres. He sees nature; he hears it and understands it musically. Here lies my task. I want to make evident and to characterize these differences of psychology and of surroundings, thus creating a spiritual portrait and giving to the work the value of interpretation and of creation.

It must be understood that « photographer-artists » and « artist-photographers » will always have the task of making physical portraits of the subject and their work will always be interesting from the affective and documentary point of view.

I think I may consider a painting of mine of the year 1919, entitled « Myself and my wife », as the first instance of psychological portrait. It was painted at Viareggio and it is inspired by the house in which I lived. My wife, dressed in dark blue, is standing on the balcony; three are her arms to show her exemplary domestic qualities. The bed-room is open to light and to intimacy. In the foreground we see the painter with a large pallet in his hand and a flower in his button-hole contrasting with all his mourning figure of black poverty, dumb and as hermetic as a diving apparatus, stubborn in his dream. A bottle of turpentine at his feet. Sitting on a stool, he paints, within the red house open like a magic box. This painting, belonging to the Mattioli Collection of Milan, was exhibited for the first time in Milan in 1921 at the Moretti Gallery — Palazzo Cova in Piazza della Scala. Later, it was exhibited in Prague, Berlin and Dusseldorf. It was reproduced in many papers and magazines and also in the artistic dictionary « Comanducci » of Bergamo in the 1946 edition.

Later, I painted two other instances of psychological portraits. One of F. T. Marinetti and the other of the aviator Fedele Azari. I painted them in a hotel room in Milan. I depicted Marinetti as a patriotic thunder-storm, as a mass of rockets and of tricolored lightnings bursting from his metallic head and from his heart filled with flags. I stylized his arm as an index and an outstretched prow. Oratory volumes flow from his sonorous lips. In Azari's painting, instead, I depicted the blue man, the aviator made up of space, and near by I painted his second personality: the man of the world in tails, the lover of elegance and of women, haloed with aeroplanes and factories.

And to-day, ladies and gentlemen, I present « Johnny and the armadillo », psychological portrait, edition 1946.

a gentleman asks

« Excuse me, have you been to New-York? » « Yes, why? ».

« What do Americans think of this painting of yours? ».

« They think it is very good. « The New-York Times » wrote that one of my shows was wonderful.

« The famous critic Christian Brinton wrote that Depero is a new, great force of Modern Art.

« The Jewish daily paper: « Die Freiheit » wrote that, among the Italian artists exhibiting their works in New-York at that time two were really interesting: Modigliani and Depero.

« Several illustrated magazines, the Corriere d'America and other italo-american papers and magazines dedicated to me many of their pages. As you see, I could not have found a better welcome ».

« And what is the meaning of the title of that painting down there on the left: « Metropolitan chiropterus »?

« Chiropteruses belong to the family of bats and with that painting I represented a running metropolitan cyclist. The fleeting, cinematic flame of the human figure and of the bicycle looks like a strange winged bat. I fixed on canvas this swift figuration thrust against a crumbling piece of city. The inclined towers seem to fall on the racing cyclist; they add speed and underline the flight effect.

« As to the subject, I must remind you that nineteenth century painters exalted sowers, mowers and black-smiths and I have taken the liberty of exalting cyclists and motor-cyclists. These are two symbols of modernity personifying our epoch with as much deserving efficacy.

« Do you see that gentleman who is just going out? It is the famous painter Anselmo Bucci. He stopped before each of my paintings and drawings, examining them one by one and, at the end, when taking his leave, he said to me: « I hope you are glad that all young avant-garde artists copy you and follow you ».

« Does that mean I am the leader of a new School? ».

« Will you please explain to me the reason of these sharp noses and of these oblong heads? ».

« Of course. Do you know the scholastic definition of a line? « A straight line is represented by an endless number of points following one another ». Now imagine this point to be represented by a sphere in motion. An endless number of these spheres following one another would not make a line, but a huge cylinder, a transparent tube. Now imagine a human head, instead of a sphere, rapidly moving from place to place: the resulting image would look like a humanised cylinder — with long eyes, like small comets of light — with sharp projected noses — with ears, foreheads and skulls drawn and transfigured within the cylindrical image traced by the motion of the head. These are the deformations which, from time to time, you find in my paintings.

« At this point, I wish to call your attention to something: the elements which I have stylized and deformed do not correspond to those of my futurist predecessors who expressed their physical impressions of figures and elements in motion. On the contrary, I try and wish to determine and to define the magic and fantastic aspects which reality undergoes in moving transfiguration.

an engineer asks me

« why the riding figures of the painting « The cup of love » have cylindrical, tube-like limbs? ».

I answer: « If you look closely they are not cylindrical, but conical,

with truncated tops. I thus stylized the movements in order to give the idea of thrust forward arms and thighs and of volumetric advancement. A muscular analysis would render them still and ordinary, while, in this way, they are synthetized in their gallop of love ».

« Why did you call it « The cup of love? ».

« Because in the fore-ground there is a cup, as composition element. In the traditional sense, a painter, in this case, would have depicted two lovers tightly embraced and, in front of them, a glass standing on the table. On the contrary, I wished to represent the flame of the lovers in the gallop of their passion, together with the cup following them in space as a symbolic cup of love, as a rocket of happiness.

« Thus, the title.

« Why some of your figurations of persons, animals, insects and flowers are of wood? ».

« They are purposely so, for they recall the dancers, clowns, savages, automatons, insects and flowers which were ideated for my plastic theatre, the new puppet theatre for children and grown-ups which was concreted and performed successfully in Rome in 1918. I had, as co-operators, the Swiss writer Gilbert Clavel, the two Italian musicians Malipiero and Casella and the English musician Thiawitt. It was the very first instance of experimental theatre in Italy, following which many experimental theatres, both in Italy and abroad, saw the light.

« Artists, architects, business-men, important personages, traditionalists and modernists have carefully visited this 82nd Show of mine with obvious interest. And the many works that have been sold prove, in these critical times, its concrete success even if certain papers have tried to insinuate untrue, common and dishonest hints.

« Do you know Cisari, the talented engraver and placard-painter? He told me that this Show is the most interesting he has seen in Milan after the war. I am very grateful to him for his generous judgement of true artist.

« What does this painting entitled « BEETLE OF HARLEM » mean? « It shows the figure of a mulatto of the negro part of New-York. I must tell you that tubes and pipes are one of the characteristics of this super-metropolis. Visible or invisible, they make up its tentacular bowels, roots and veins, from its deep foundations to its highest pinnacles. Tubes for the Subway. Tubes for the heating. Tubes for the currents of water, of air, of light. Tubes of every diameter and in every direction.

From the hips of this mulatto, holding a basket in his left hand and a huge cigar in his right hand, many tubes grow out, like as

many cylindrical arms, similar to a multiple system of paws as insects have. These are setting elements which have grafted themselves on the human figure, giving it the amazing, synthetic and magic appearance of a metropolitan beetle.

talking about sacred art

I must say, first of all, that, with this short piece I do not intend to write a lecture on sacred art, since this subject has already been illustrated and developed by many books in every language. I only wish to discuss briefly the artistic possibility of dealing with sacred subjects with the technique, the dynamics, the spirit and the taste of modern art. For I think that, since a typically interpretative artistic expression is immaterial and a true product of the spirit, of the mind and of inspiration, art should be the most effective means for religious exaltation. The world revealed by the Church is liable to fancy in its loftiest meaning and to stylistic and interpretative transcendency, there where physics and metaphysics, statics and dynamics, material and abstract sense, dramatic and cinematic sense alternate and mingle, play and join one another with surprising multiform variety. The life, the history and the literature of the Church, the creed of the believers, religious ceremonies, mysticism and the miracles of Saints offer a boundless field of spectacular surprise and transcendency which excite the image-power of the artist. In my opinion, the word «religion» means faith in a supernatural life, faith in what lies beyond, faith in forces and mysteries that are unknown to us: forces and mysteries surrounding and dominating us in spite of the genius of man and the revelations of science. Religion means bold projection of the spirit into an eternal dissecting evolution in space and in time. It does not mean negation of what is natural and material, but purification of what is decaying and transient towards the eternal irradiation of what is luminous and vital. Therefore, I am convinced that art and plastic discoveries, formal values grasped and revealed by the painters of to-day concerning light, sound, gestures, rythm, abstraction, metaphysics and aerodynamics, are the suitable means to interpret, illustrate and represent sacred visions, magical apparitions, idealizations and sanctifications, miracles, the immaterial life of God's favourites, every divine symbolism, every mystical emanation and spiritual devotion, the everlasting struggle between matter and spirit, between good and evil.

The artist represents these interpretations and figurations with lighted and luminous hearts, blessing irradiating hands, celestial apparitions, miraculous lights, stigmata and magical wounds, aerial projections, supernatural, subaqueous compenetrations and wonderful facts of supernatural reality.

The Church has understood and clearly proved the power of art in order to exalt and immortalise superior ideals and lofty aspirations. By means of pictorial, plastic, literary, oral, musical and lofty spectacular art, the Church has constantly glorified and handed down from century to century its high ideological aim, it has exalted martyrs, Saints and Apostles, it has represented scenes, visions, sorrows and joys, it has transformed anatomical, earthly matter into deified spiritual plastic: where pupils and lips, thirsty for redemption and penance, project invocations and holy, burning devotions; where transparent, winged vows richly rise up to the sky, towards the longed for heights of Paradise whose open gates offer a vision of ethereal fields and of enchanted gardens which only the divine genius of an artist can foresee and represent.

The metaphysical landscapes and figurations of good and of evil which the Church has been able to depict, with lyrical power, for thousands of years, still offer the artist an infinite dramatic field of inspiration and of renewed fancy. I am, moreover, convinced that ecclesiastical laws cannot and do not wish to forbid this interpreting and representative renewal when it is expressed by honest and talented artists. This renewal has, indeed, already successfully begun, since our times ask for it, new esthetics require it, new sensibility expresses it and new means remould it. A representation of the large and mystical religious world which man, to whatever race and class he may belong, decidedly needs for his daily elevation and his after life.

negro art, that is, the plastic of the savages

The art of the savages is considered by many as nothing more than a curiosity for ethnographical museums, as a grotesque expression lacking artistic interest. According to many scholars and modern artists, on the contrary, it represents interesting aspects and offers problems that it is worth while considering. We have already many editions richly illustrating this primitive art of every latitude. Undoubtedly, it is a poor art, since poor are its interpreters. It is a primitive art, since primitive are its makers. It is a childish art containing the stuttering language and the elementary alphabet of the man of the forest, lacking a civilized language, careful expressions, complicated needs and a refined way of living. It is the art of the man who is born, lives and dies naked and in whose brain are only the rudimental ideas of vegetal and animal life for his needs, his pleasures and his struggle for existence. He is the man-plant, the man-animal, the man-earthly organism who is born and lives in the forest and of the forest he assimilates the language, the color and taste. Therefore, only from the forest he can draw inspiration for his limited and stuttering artistic expression. His art is an unripe

fruit, almost shapeless, of rough matter, expressed with savage instinct and brutal engravings, like his guttural and monosyllabic language recalling the voices of animals. In the same tonality he expresses himself in his singing, monotonous and syncopated. Thus are savage decorations: elementary and approximately geometrical, engraved with a clear cut of sharp stone or of roughly worked metallic point and made in the bark of trunks, on wooden shields, on the sides of canoes and even burnt in the skin of their own bodies. Since their spiritual world is limited and childish, also the style and the contents of their plastic complexes are traced with the instinctive graphic brutality of unconsciousness, of gestures, of the primeval cylindrical, spherical and knotty form with the rudimental simplification of the basilar geometrical form of nature, of stones, of flowers, of trunks, of paws and of snake tails.

A hole for an eye or an almond-shaped cut on a potato-like swelling. A large cut for a mouth and three flat fingers at each hand attached to what is more like a branch than an anatomical arm. Two flat blocks for the feet and a few gashes, rather than decorations on the round belly or on the pointed buttocks.

Sometimes these faces look frightening, grotesque and caricature-like, with amazing and burlesque monstrosity, with exaggerated lips outstretched like a plate. Rings or small sticks hang from the ear-lobes and from the cartilages of the nose. The savage artist is not interested in flora. Sometimes, he is struck by tigers or monkeys which he stylizes in their elementary lines.

Idols have for him a great attraction, masks excite him and he puts colored stones in their eyes and mouth. The hair is made with straw, and beards with roots or hard herbs.

Improvising with a true primeval instinct, savage artists strike us for their figurative courage expressed with the most unprejudiced use of various matters and with the stylization of organs, limbs and symbols.

I am not an enthusiastic admirer of African or Arctic art, but it would be a mistake and an act of misunderstanding to judge this art as worth nothing and to deny its values. For it possesses barbarian candour and primeval sincerity.

The characteristics of this art are: rythm, formal and expressive synthesis, the intention of stunning and frightening by means of grotesque and deformation and also (and this is most deserving) the intention of ideating something which does not exist and which is not born in the forest, the desire of creating something more than an animal, and of offering a mask, a monster or an idol (the very first idea of a symbol) to the Dominating Forces.



brawl (pencil drawing 1944)

f. depero



pencil drawing • 1936

L. Depierre

magic

According to lexicons, it is the doctrine of the ancient Oriental magicians: wisdom of evocation, of miracles and of divination of the future. Black, devilish magic and natural magic of physical and chemical properties; telepathic, medianic and psychic phenomenons. We say: a magic of beauty. We say: a magic glance, magic visions and music. Effects of colors and of surreal enchanting forms of unexpected events. Strange apparitions of objects, of figures and of gestures. In my paintings there are red houses opening and glass houses closing. Hard flowers and liquid mountains. Fish of chalk, women of coral, plants of metal and transparent furniture. Rare animals of all colors, glimmering as precious stones within dull landscapes. One of my magic paintings represents a dance of crystal dancers. It is a vivification of topaze, of feminine splendour dancing on the mirror of an indigo pond in the green light of the rising moon. The rythm is not of the limbs but of the gestures. The motion is not of the muscle, but of the muscle in space. The drawing is that of the square and of compasses. The shading is that of feathers and the clearness is that of glass. It is an ultraphysic vision of fantomatic geometry. It is the electrified stylization of calculation, of the ray and of Hertzian waves.

magic paintings

In 1920, I painted a canvas measuring about 60 x 80 cm. and bearing the title: « Embroiderer and reader ». The back-ground is grey, cold and clear. Two figures sitting one in front of the other. One made of black matter and the other of white matter. The first figure is embroidering: her feet are lying on a stool. Her arms are at the loom, one above and the other below. She has begun a mosaic of butterflies and holds in her hand a vivid wing. On her ovoidal head, a feminine tress. The other figure is reading. A big open book lies on her knees as a heavy block. Book, chair, woman and tress are of the same single color and matter. These are two ghosts. They have a human appearance but they do not belong to humanity. The essence of their images is, in one, shadow, and in the other, candour. From the life of two physical truths, two metaphysical images have been taken. The enchantment of what is essential, the image of gestures, the volume of mimics. They are moulded in space as magical apparitions.

With this painting, together with another well-known work of mine entitled « The house of the magician » (belonging to Gianni Mattioli of Milan), I begun a plastic world having a magic character. This is the proper term meaning color, form, line, character, style, matter and magic. It encloses, in organic order, the elements of composition and of expressive transfiguration.

roxy theatre - new york

The Roxy Theatre is a block between the 51st and the 52nd Street at the 7th Avenue, quite near the crowded centre of Broadway. Like many other theatres, it has a large metallic roof at the entrance, spreading its dazzling lights on the public and the street.

The hall is large, filled with mirrors and placards, peopled with shouting newspapers boys and guides belonging to the theatre, with bottle green cloaks, golden stripes and rigid, soldier like caps. Their voice and mimic are monotonous and automatic. They show the way to the stalls and boxes and announce the beginning of the film, of the dances and of the vaudeville numbers.

The external and the internal hall, the splendid stairs and the corridors leading to the boxes are completely covered with thick carpets so that the coming and going of so many people is quite silent. I went behind the stage. The stage floor is divided into mobile pieces that can be lowered and lifted, so that parts of the scene or complete sceneries can appear and disappear with silent and precise speed.

The stage background is rigid and widely concave. At its basis and on the ceiling it has a series of multicolored headlights through which one can obtain endless luminous gradations: day breaks, dawns, sunsets, night lights, sunlight and artificial lights of every strength. In a side corridor, a wide wall is covered with electric switches and there a skilful technician gives all the necessary lighting to the show. He moves clouds, lets down mountains, plants forests, displaces furniture and actors suddenly or gradually, with order and ease.

The owner and general manager has a luminous and extremely silent study on the tenth floor. From there, in his bright and quiet room, he dominates the infernal centre of New-York and directs the complicated life of his large theatre. The labyrinth-like, underground rooms contain complicated machinery for heating in winter and of cooling in summer, for the continuous changing of the air, for the lighting, the kitchens, the restaurant, the tailor's rooms and the workshops of the theatre.

I walk among underground pipes, guided and lighted by yellow, red and green lights, I go up and down in various elevators, accompanied by Leonidoff, the manager, by Massine, the dance master and by Montedoro, the Italian costume artist. Suddenly, they make me stop at the tenth floor and we visit Rothaphel's study. After a few minutes, we halt at the sixth floor and I see the rehearsal of a Chinese dance. On the third floor, they take me to a box from which I can enjoy the suggestive vision of a Mexican show. Then, they rush me down through complicated underground rooms.

I walk along many corridors almost in darkness, I enter through

a small door. There is hardly room. Once the door is closed, a button is pressed and the small room rises slowly for a few seconds.

I shall never forget the vision which then appeared. In front of me, a theatrical action, bustling and exciting. Under me, the enormous, deep orchestra. On my right, the pianist and the conductor on a foot board; behind me, the salient, boundless black forest of the public. We are on an observatory-elevator, concealed and used only by managers and directors. The vision is imposing: a performance with its full theatrical effect, with a simultaneous view of its complicated mechanical function and of the public.

ships — (Aerodynamic considerations).

Listen to me, my dear reader. During the crossing from Genoa to New-York I had the opportunity of visiting and examining at my pleasure the ship on which I had sailed. It was an Italian ship: with modern machinery but with old fashioned furnishings.

The cylindrical walls, the straight beams, the spiral shaped voids, the extending decks, the daring chimneys and the cutting prow of a modern ship require and inspire, in my opinion, a suitable internal architecture and a decoration logically harmonic and in tune. That is: a more linear, a clearer and more luminous architecture. Shapes, profiles decoration and furniture should be more aerial, more fleeting and ship-like. Diffused lights enlivened by blue, green, white and grey luminous colors. Curved, coolly colored rooms in which crowds, air, light and thought can easily glide, and thanks to which ease and comfort can be bettered.

Capitals and archaic columns, the compartments of medioeval ceilings, Romanic arcades, statues, Empire friezes and Liberty ornaments are obviously out of tune and contrast unpleasantly with the modern and swift sharp palace, bony and frisky, conquering space and boldly defying the storms of the ocean.

In a work of mine of 1940, I wrote:

« One fine day, I hope, some generous and purifying squalls will rise from the green atlantic valleys and will sweep away the old static, historical and muddled weight of the anti-marine furnishings of the ships of to-day ».

I wrote this to express an abstract and metaphorical wish; unfortunately I was instead a tragic prophet, for, to-day, many of these ships lie in the atlantic abysses. However I hope that my wish for stylistic renewal may come true in the battle for reconstruction we are fighting.

To these artistic considerations, I add to-day a few notes taken from an article published on the « Corriere della Sera » of the year 1947 and entitled: « New ultraswift ships, smoothing the waters of the sea ».

«A Venetian technician, Giovanni Pecorini, has planned ships technically meant for high speed which, as he says, will not please the eye that has been used for centuries to the normal form of a majestic palace with huge chimneys, sail masts of medioeval style, external upper decks, slender prow thrust forward and heavy stern jutting out on the sea ... To these things, Pecorini's courage and talent will substitute, as he says: «New hulks, hardly feeling the motion of the waves and thus reducing all pitching and rolling, without overframes (unrational) and with completely streamline constructive lines having much better and more horizontal wave profiles and race assets, so that the ship can make 65-70 knots per hour (120-130 Km)..... Therefore I must close by saying that art and technique cannot help progressing side by side, that is in a streamline style, both in the construction and in the external and internal esthetics of a ship.

how did i get on in new-york?

Before going to the States, I was told that Americans do not understand much of art. Undoubtedly, they devote themselves more to business and practical problems than to Art and spiritual problems. But I must truly say, for instance, that critique in New-York is significative, for it is unprejudiced, objective, clarifying and faithfully fulfilling its purpose.

It works exactly as a bridge of understanding and of education between the artist and the public. In my case, I had clear and honest criticisms, the best, may be, which I gathered during my long artistic toil. And this does not seem to me a mark of poor understanding. Two different ways of judging and of interviewing.

New-York: (Personal Show at the Guarino Gallery — Madison Ave.). The door of the elevator opens. A tall and fair young man comes in. He takes off his overcoat, his coat and his wollen sweater, then puts on his coat again and asks for Mr. Depero. He is on the staff of the «Times». The interview lasts exactly two hours. He takes notes of everything: titles, dates, meaning. The slightest details interest him. He wants to know all about my past and present activity. He writes down the chronology of my shows and principal works. He inquires my artistic ideas. Then he puts on his overcoat again and is off with a short «good-bye». You should have expected a full page, adventurous or chronistorical. On the contrary, I was given exactly 48 lines. Few, but clear and concise, summing up my ideologies and work: a descriptive interpretation, a generous and conscientious hospitality.

Milan: (Personal Show at the «Camino» - Via Montenapoleone). A well-known critic (?) comes in. «Hullo, old man! Hullo! How are you getting on? Well, and you? Not so bad, thanks. Oh! but I know already all these things of yours. How is that? We have not seen

each other for seven years; how can you say you know these works if they have been done in 1943-44-45 and 46? But I never lost sight of you». He then glances around: in one glance he understands everything. He turns round, says «hullo», rushes out and then writes five lines of cutting criticism!

I went to New-York in 1927 and staid there till 1931. During this time I set up seven personal shows. The press took much notice both of my decorative art and of my painting. The famous critic Christian Brinton introduced me to the public and to the most important newspapers. He also wrote the introduction to one of my catalogues in which, among other, things, he says: « Depero created organic plastic dynamism transcending beyond specific groups and possessing a rythmical vibration and an esthetic manner of its own».

In New-York, I had to fight against many difficulties, also because I could not speak English. I can, however, make myself understood in German and so I was able to speak with managers of theatres, secretaries of galleries, critics, people belonging to the artistic world and Jews knowing German. I found, in them, sympathy and understanding, for they are clever and interested in everything. I also found, in them, real practical help and therefore I always remember them gratefully.

For instance, Mrs. Catherine Dreier introduced herself to me and asked to enter the organizing committee of my first Show. At her expense, advertisements were published in the papers. She had works of mine reproduced in magazines and caused me to sell many paintings with the spirit of a real Mecenat.

I was also obliged to struggle against the continental climate, terribly cold in winter and tropical in summer, a climate in which we Italians can hardly breathe, used as we are to mild, temperate weather. The following daily papers published articles on my art: «The New-York Times», «The New-York Sun», «The Morning Freiheit», «Vanity Fair», «Vogue», «Brochure Quarterly», «Movie Makers», «The New-York Times Magazine», «Theatre Magazine», «Corriere d'America», «Il Progresso Italio-Americano», «Atlantica» and so on...

At New-York, I had the opportunity of designing scenes and costumes for the Roxy Theatre. Do you want to know how I got the order and how I fulfilled it? The story is worth telling.

One fine morning, no, one nasty morning, for it was drizzling and I had only a few dollars in my pocket, I went out in search of a firm to which I could offer some of my sketches. Half an our of tram and subway, half an hour in a wreck of a tram-car through dirty quarters of ghetto. I stumble and curse, smelling a horrible stink, I walk through the thick rain, closing my drawings and my thoughts

within a defying scroll which I keep under my arm thinking of Roman catapults and of D'Annunzio's motto: «I crumble without fighting». Meanwhile the water is streaming down my neck and my knees and feet feel like ice.

The metal bridges which I cross are gigantic; when a train passes the noise is like an earthquake: the man who built them, has almost the right of feeling near God for his lofty daring and near the Devil for the deafening matter with which he has built them. Beams, beams, beams. Beams before me and beams behind me; beams to my right and beams to my left. Beams in front of me and in my mind. A real force gaol of beams.

I come down from the bridges and get on another tram-car. We pass by many blocks of houses: reddish, smoky, factory-like. I get off. I walk backwards and forwards. I ask, ask again and, at last, an iron door bears the number I am seeking. I go in: powerful elevator in metal for heavy loads. 15th floor. The door divides itself, one part rises, the other goes down. It is really the Fhirm I am seeking! But... my works do not interest them; they do not care for my style. So, with this new unexpected blow, I set out on my long return journey. I get home late in the evening. I throw my portfolio in a corner. I haven't even the strength of saying hullo to my wife: I keep my last breath to curse the metropolitan hell of New-York. I gulp down some dinner and undress for bed. Just at this moment, the telephone rings. «Nina, answer the 'phone; I am not in for anybody» «It is the Roxy Theatre asking for you; the manager wants you to go at once to his office; he will be there till midnight». I clench my teeth, slip on my shoes again and put on my neck-tie. Again tram and subway. Here is the Roxy.

Along the corridor there is a coming a going of legs, of shoulders, of breasts, a dancing about of rosy skin.

«Good evening, Mr. Leonidoff».

«Good evening, Mr. Depero. I need urgently two sketches of scenes and three sketches of costumes for to-morrow morning at eleven».

«Why, you are crazy! How can I do it? I am very tired to-day and...»

«Did you not ask me for some work? You begged me to remember you. Never mind, I will use my scenographer».

«No, no, I was only saying I was tired and that you give me very little time. But it's all right, Mr. Leonidoff, thank you. I will be here to-morrow morning at eleven».

I get home with my head and body full of noises of wheels, of beams, of trams and of subways. I feel more downhearted than ever. I wake up my wife and say to her: «dress yourself, make me some tea and some coffee, I also need a sandwich because I must plan out two scene sketches and three costume sketches for to-morrow morning at eleven».

Will I succeed or not? Well, I must try!

The next morning, I am punctual at the Roxy. The sketches are all right. I cash a fat wad of dollars and return home, happy for the fulfilled order and blessing the metropolitan heaven of New-York!

what do you mean by aerodynamic painting?

I will explain: do you allow an evolution of form in the construction of a ship, of a locomotive, of a 'plane of vehicles of every kind, of practical of scientific instruments? Do you acknowledge reform in the cut of a suit, in fashions, in methods, in style, in the technical, sporting, lyrical and scientific field? Well then, you should allow the same evolution in the field of plastic arts. As in every field there are reasons justifying and imposing evolution, also in Art there should be reasons justifying and imposing it. Don't you think so?

An aerodynamic epoch can only correspond to plastic aerodynamic art: an art containing synthetic drawing and unitary, vibrating, aerial coloring, a conception agreeing with our aspirations and our style. Really I do not consider these demands excessive.

Have aeroplanes been conceived?

Has electricity been conceived?

Has the wireless been conceived?

Has syncopated music been conceived?

Has the atomic bomb been conceived?

Has there not been an evolution in medicine?

Have there not been evolutions in architecture and house furnishing?

Why then should there not be an evolution in plastic arts? If you think it over and if you are fair you will agree with me!

Of course, I agree with you when you say that in modern avanguard painting all that glisters is not gold. Great attention and a serious physical and chemical analysis of these new contents are required. But the incontestable principles of these expressions which are carefully studied and followed by the best artists, by the most intelligent and honest critique and by the best part of the public, have been ideated and followed by twentieth century artists. And it is on this way that I walk, convinced and tireless.

yes, marinetti had no strict principles

And that is the reason why I, too, was obliged to abandon him fifteen years ago: for his incorrigible habit of putting everything in the same bundle.

When he crystallized himself on his fixed idea of aeroexpressions, he once put me a question which was almost a reproach: « Why do you not take up aeropainting? » I answered him that compulsory and insincere futurism is stupid. I told him that I would devote myself to aeropainting only when I would be able to fly at least three times a week. A compulsory thing is worth nothing. I then added that

he ought to be glad that at least one futurist still devoted himself to a sincere creating dynamism which was earthly and not aerial, without turning to aeropictorial liberties. But poor old Marinetti had his own fixed ideas and I had the pride of my freedom. The second contrast happened when I published my «Radiophonic Lyrics», slightly contrasting with the «words in liberty», but at the same time boldly free and rich of lyrical transcendencies and interpreting onomatopoeia suitable for radiotransmission.

But I will repeat that one of his chief mistakes was the generous ease with which he found talent in every amateur and opportunist who knocked at his door. With more seriousness and a better selection and with more loyalty to his early aims he would have been more successful and would have been treated with greater respect. In my opinion, Art and talent means selection and minority and not number. Hence, our difference and separation.

I was really sorry, for my contribution to this movement was considerable: from the theatre to painting, from architecture to literature, from decoration to plastics and publicity. The many works I published and my 82 Shows, both personal and collective, in Italy and abroad, as also the immense echo of the Press which I have kept and catalogued, are the best proof of my words and confirm them, leaving no room for doubts.

My clarifying and propagating contribution consisted in works of various kind which caused surprise, interest and flattering reviews in many papers of Europe and America and started many imitators, then and to-day.

it was written:

that some of the founders and supporters of the futuristic movement now disown and condemn it. This piece of news may be true or not, but, in any case it does not interest or surprise me. Its importance is not great, since everyone may do as one pleases. The artistic field is boundlessly free and artistic compromises are justifiable. There are scruples, repentances and crisis of brains and temperaments. A painter may go from dynamism to statics and vice-versa; from reality to abstraction and vice-versa; from physics to metaphysics and vice-versa; from realism to surrealism and vice-versa. One tendency does not exclude other tendencies. Only conclusions are important: the attained aim, the finished work.

If a painter once devoted himself to dynamism and now abandons it, denies it and even criticizes it, it is his own business. This does not mean, however, that futurism has had his day. It is always worthy of interest and many artists still work in its ranks with unchanged passion.

Dynamism is in life and in nature itself. To examine its values,



metropolitan simultaneusness . (charcoal drawing 1944)

l. depero



heads and beams - (charcoal drawing 1914)

l. depero

to express its aspects, to discover its secrets, to mould its phenomena, to reveal its inmost laws is not fickle nonsense following fashion, whims and trite taste; it is an expression and an intention of sincerity, of intelligence, of skill and often also of undeniable talent. I have already said that all the artistic movements of these last years are experimental expressions of evolution. Also plastic dynamism was but an indicatory initial revelation. It must be developed, made deeper, dissected in its inmost laws, clarified in its conceptions, brought on a level of easier understanding, of popularity, of logical evidence and taste, of style and of extensive application.

If someone struggled in this field and then gave it up, that is no business of ours. Prudent and uncertain people, fickle, limited, fragile and undeceived people have always existed. It is a question of opinion and of temperament. I cannot blame them if they have preferred new ways more satisfying to their tastes. They are free and responsible of their destiny. But I insist in saying that this does not mean that plastic dynamism — expressed in every form and way — interpreted with individual freedom — is something dead, transient, trite, unexisting. The eloquent proof of this is that many artists follow, in various ways, the path traced by the masters of contemporary avangardes. They feel attracted and enlightened by our theories — consciously or unconsciously. The necessity of dynamizing, of interpreting in a modern manner is the necessary language of evolution; we cannot escape from this imperative need and we must fulfil it.

To be dynamic, synthetic, modernly creative does not mean having to go against one's character, it does not mean giving up contemplative poetry, sharp analysis, lofty meditation, the loving study of human and divine laws, of the soul, of the heart and of thought.

On the contrary, dynamism and modernity help to develop such investigations and enrich every manifestation of the spirit. It is not true that the materialism of to-day has killed the spirit; it has, on the contrary, lighted up new longings and caused new plastic aspirations.

Our senses have been centuplicated and we feel physically and morally fit to value with intensified sharpness and greater creative constructiveness, for the conception of works worthy of our epoch. May those young people who feel attracted by modernity persevere with love, seriousness and constancy on these new horizons full of unknown surprises. As to me, I feel right in the centre of the twentieth century high-road and have no doubts for my future.

an insincere person

once wrote that Futurism was not even a theory. On the contrary, Futurism might be accused of having too many theories. And here

I must add that my contribution to futuristic theories has been great. For instance (since documentation is always useful):

- 1) With plastic and moving scenography. I will say, for those who do not know it, that in the first list of the 27 revolutionary artists of the European theatre, two Italians were invited: Pirandello and Depero.
 - 2) With my plastic theatre in Rome in 1918, widely illustrated by Italian and foreign papers and magazines.
 - 3) In the field of painting, with the «new fairy-like», with psychological portraits, with «steel style» and with magic painting. These ideologies would fill a whole volume on my painting alone; indeed they have caused the definition of «The Classic of Dynamism» given me by foreign reviews.
 - 4) Together with Giacomo Balla, in Rome in 1916, I was the first to declare myself an «abstract painter» and to make a name for myself as such with works and manifests. And now that abstractism is fashionable and gaining adepts everywhere, I think this priority of mine has a certain importance. Unfortunately, my name is not Deperowsky, nor Depoir, nor von Birne: had it been so, triumph would have been mine or, as the writer Ettore Romagnoli wrote, people would admire me on their knees.
 - 5) In Rome in 1916, I entered the literary field with «Onomatongue», the abstract language of matter, of moods and of interpreting and not imitative onomatopoeia. I continued with my «RADIO LYRICS», published by G. Morreale of Milan. I started a typographic revolution with my volume: «DEPERO — FUTURIST 1927», published by Azari of Milan. This book was extensively reviewed abroad, and typographers, poets and architects took and copied many of its ideas and conceptions. (I can prove this).
 - 6) To the plastic field I also gave typographic architecture and the work of art in motion. (This latter expression was plagiarized in the States by Russian artists).
 - 7) We need not go into details regarding my contribution to the decorative field where with tapestries, mosaics, inlays and artistic objects I made a name for myself everywhere by winning international competitions of modernity. The critic Ugo Nebbia (1946), Superintendent to the monuments of Milan, wrote that I «held up, often alone, the name of our country abroad and maintained the prestige of Italian art.».
- With all this ideological, theoretical and practical baggage, I travelled round the world with my works and my enthusiasm, and everywhere I sowed something. To-day I am pleased to see myself robbed and imitated even if some of our ignorant and insincere press tries to conceal it.

But silence, insinuations, calumnies and stupid lies cannot be successful. Good ideas bear fruit, good works speak. Good seeds sprout and produce. Intelligence and talent, honesty and truth always end by conquering. Bad weeds daily dry up and die: their life is short though embarrassing. The sun of truth ripens good corn. This is not a rethorical language; it is the language of sincerity and light, of truth and of faith.

graphical tales

In preparatory schools, pupils are given compositions to write, for instance: « Winter », « The Mother », « Our country », « A trip on the montains », « What I saw at the Movies » and so on. These compositions are developed and described by each boy on one, two or three pages of his copy-book.

The pupil tells with short sentences and with a simple and elementary language what he knows, what he has seen, what has especially struck him. He tells according to his temperament in formation, physical and moral, sad or gay, diffuse or concise generous or stingy, open or closed in, naive or cunning.

Thirty pupils writing on a different theme write in thirty different ways. Well, I often asked myself why this faculty of writing expression is allowed with plenty of freedom while graphical tales are neglected and often punished.

While talking with a Minister for Public Instruction, I heard of a plan to be introduced in preparatory schools satisfying my request. Pupils would be allowed, or rather, obliged to illustrate their compositions with graphical, decorative and descriptive elements. I was exceedingly pleased at hearing this, for this innovation means certain educational progress.

Children are happy to scribble: they trace, with a few approximate lines, objects that have interested them, their favourite animal, the flowers they have gathered. They represent these things in their elementary contours, with spontaneous boldness, moving candour, amusing and curious attention. They draw with a particular summing up writing deformed, improbable and often alogical. They draw what has struck them most, they choose the elements that have interested them and left them wondering. They do all this instinctively. They draw hands with three fingers and sometimes with ten fingers each. To them, the eye is a circle, a parenthesis or a hole. The nose, seen from the front, is a triangular point turned upside down. Hats are hardly ever fitted on the head: their basis is usually a tangent to the curve of the skull. Houses have three, four, five fronts: as many as they know them, as many as they want and see them. On the walls they draw windows, stairs and internal elements. All this is drawn simultaneously: internal and external ele-

ments, seen and remembered elements, near and distant elements. Sometimes these unprejudiced graphical attempts make one think and contain some surprising and precious teaching.

It is a pity and a mistake that this graphical expressivity should be later neglected and even forbidden, that is, when children enter higher schools and also higher artistic schools. The eyes and mind are brought back to perspective reality, to objective evidence, to external anatomy, to compulsory rules.

I admit that this is scholastic wisdom - useful and necessary, but, in my opinion, insufficient. Together with representative perfection and to technical reality, figurative freedom should be allowed: free development individually conceived, thus continuing on that free, instinctive way perceived by the child and not taught or simply shown by the master.

Masters may teach means and laws, but they should not stifle the characteristic and spontaneous way of expressing one's temperament. They should, on the contrary, perceive the differences of character and encourage personal tendencies.

Exaggerations, disproportions, free perspectives, sovrappositions, the symbolism of caricature, inventive sense should be encouraged and guided, for these licences often contain elements of spirit of observation, of imaginative enthusiasm and graphical intelligence. These expressions reveal a personal way of seeing and of representing and a personal inward world which, after all, is what counts most.

my painting is not painting

I once heard somebody saying this and may be other painters will agree. But why? Because it is hard - wooden - metallic - with points, corners and gearings? These people only care for the color element in painting and tonalities are their aim. To color I add a definite drawing and a palpable form. An arrogant perspective. A transcendental stylization. A multiform interpretation. A world of beings, flora and fauna within a fairy-like setting which is my own. Loved, moulded, and drawn during forty years with passionate study and sincere devotion. And this is something.

When Giovanni Segantini's works first appeared, people said that his painting was not art. The same was said of Previati and of Cremona. Not to speak of Umberto Boccioni against whom all sort of things were written. And Modigliani, who is now glorified, was left to starve to death when still very young.

He who thinks that my painting is not painting is probably a painter endowed with a sense limited to only one of the values of painting: pure color, tonalities of setting, human resemblance and so on, according to his personal short-sightedness: a painter representing what he sees and what he believes to interpret with more or less

intelligence, with more or less skill, with more or less taste, with more or less seriousness.

And so this denier of my art finds himself facing the insuperable smooth wall of his own limitations and mediocrity. All right, all the best to you. You say nothing and you do not interest me.

I am interested in exceptional artists: the few who remain, the few who reveal unknown aspects of reality and enrich the history of art with a language of their own, the magical language of their own inward world. And this is not little.

Giovanni Segantini represented, with a style of his own, cows, lights, pinnacles, skies, clouds, with a poetical lyrism, with a pictorial character, with a lofty mystical and symbolical irreality which belong to him alone and are completely original.

Umberto Boccioni divided inert nature into blocks of color, plastic flames, luminous rockets, with revolutionary violence, exalting the dynamism of our century with an unmistakable language of his own. Giorgio De Chirico has, with plastic efficacy and phantomatic means, united figurative elements contrasting in character, in time and in symbolic freedom. Mansions, perspective foreshortenings, unreal horses, lunar squares, masks, puppets and objects, in settings of dream and of apocalyptic drama; and everything is quite personal. I could say as much for Carrà, Severini, Prampolini, Sironi, Martini, De Pisis, Campigli and others. I will end by saying that if the artist does not possess a world of his own to reveal and is not able to mark his work with his own character and style, his dream and his toil will be quite useless.

let us honour cubism

Divisionism of form. Analysis of external and internal formal values. Particular static importance. At first it was mere chiaroscuro, later it was enriched by strong, intense colors. Originated in Paris. Much has been written on cubism: articles and books in every country. Also in Italy there have been artist-writers and critics who illustrated this important French movement. The beginner was the painter Pablo Picasso, a Spanish artist who, having spent almost all his life in Paris, may be considered French. Läger, Lhote, Picabia, Brague, Gleizes, Delaunay, Gris and many others co-operated to the development of this movement with pictorial, plastic, literary and propaganda works. We must say, first of all, that Cubism represents divisionism of form. Starting from the most synthetic of impressionists, Paul Cézanne, it developed plastic impressionism to the utmost. Its purpose and aim was that of analysing, dividing and diving deep into plastic values, of analysing and dissecting objects, bodies, curves, convexities and thickness, corners and perspectives of trunks, of leaves, of tables, houses and human figures; of dissecting

their projections, their round, spherical, square and cubic points. From this last word the word «Cubism» originated, by which one intends the valuing of natural plastic in its inmost contents of formal cubature, of rythmical shaping, of static musicality. Cubists analyse with graphic curiosity, with formal will, with investigating talent. Contrasting with the ecstasy of color, with the impressionistic orgies of merely chromatic investigation — fascinating and dazzling — (impressionists have been the first real revolutionaries of modern painting and plastic), cubism takes up once more the consistency of form, the lost sense of plastic consistency, the palpable conscience of chiaroscuro, the suggestive interpreting relief of forms. It was not a return to scholastically classical and unexpressive verism, but a renovated and investigating return. If impressionism was the first step of pictorial dynamism towards interpretation and creation, cubism was the second step, that is, the second important cycle of modern art.

The pictorial divisionism of the impressionists and the plastic divisionism of the cubists should have been completed by a third cycle: that of Italian futuristic plastic dynamism. In Italy cubism had very few followers and, perhaps, was not rightly understood. Statics do not exclude dynamics and I dare add that if dynamism is a living expression of simultaneousness, of compenetrations, of subjective interpretation, (art is always subjective interpretation), cubism is a work of statics, of solidity and of strength. One movement should not exclude the other; on the contrary, they should mingle, identify and integrate themselves towards a single organic function. Since the function of statics is one of the foremost elements of a work of art, causing it to stand firmly and to obey the laws of contents and of resistance, cubism itself stands at the basis of art, faithful to its wise function, aiming to stylistic discipline. To analyse reality in each of its formal and rythmical secrets and then to sum them up in a group of plastic and stylistic values: this is the function of cubism. It was and still is, after all, an intelligent expression of order contrasting with impressionistic disorder. It was the key of a new lyric discipline. And since order and discipline are the laws which must support a work of art, here lie the great qualities of cubism.

I do not mean to say that we should stop at pictorial divisionism or at formal divisionism or at plastic dynamism which represents their fusion. We must always advance and develop. But it is necessary to explain and to give to each movement its honest merits. As no one could ever deny the beauty of pictorial divisionism — glorified by great Italian and foreign artists — so cubistic formal divisionism must be given the place it deserves. I quite agree that theories are but theories and that talent is talent (and it is what counts most): but theories do not exclude talent and even in Art it must be integrated and completed by the movement of ideas and programmes:

instinct and technique are not sufficient; intelligence and culture are necessary. The brain must co-operate with the hand. In one of these chapters dedicated to « Statics », I quote a motto saying: « what is not dynamic is not static and what is not static is not dynamic ». This is true for every field and can be proved with many examples. I mean that cubism does not exclude dynamism and vice-versa, that dynamism does not exclude cubism. Cubism falls when it stops and crystallises in a calligraphic, manieristic analysis, in a static exercise of angles and squarings, but it can develop and become dynamic in complex representative expressions, in complex visions of emotional organicity. Thus fall all dynamic expressions crystallized into deformistic copies, in more or less photographic aerial projections, in amateurish works having no law of static value, of organic composition, of representative seriousness and solidity.

In the complex task of Art and of evolution, every battle or tendency, every honest and able investigation, every genial experiment, deserve careful consideration for they co-operate efficaciously to the attainment of a single cultural purpose and tend towards one single lofty aim: the art of to-morrow.

The futuristic movement was probably mistaken in neglecting the static sense and in not co-operating seriously with our French colleagues; it was a mistake to have mingled politics with art (but Marinetti wanted this) thus losing sight of the essentially artistic task and forgetting that in Art it is not quantity that counts, but quality and personality. The futuristic movement thus acquired a limited national perspective and often deviated from its original principles that were decidedly dynamic. I left this movement owing to the scarce interest I felt for aeropainting, for « plastic-flesh », for « words in liberty », wishing to express myself with more lyrical and pictorial freedom, with more conscious seriousness, with original sincerity and with more artistic truth.

Art is a hard and severe path of toil, of conscience and of intentional nobility. Art is not national, but belongs to the world, to everybody; it has always been and always will be universal, that is, international. Futurism neglected French cubism and Slav impressionism, or, at least, took too little interest in them perhaps because these foreign movements neglected ours. May be this was due to political barriers dividing us; let us hope that these barriers will now definitely fall down and that a wise, lyrical and also spiritual cooperation will begin. I was pleased to read on the « Corriere della Sera » of Milan of a justified alarm regarding the future of Venetian Biennali. The writer Zorzi said that Artistic International Exhibitions should present complete movements, complex cycles of evolution and he boldly added that Cubism should be included, being a French movement of great importance. I should be very glad to see our French colleagues under our sun, so as to make Italians understand

what has been done in Paris, what has been experimented and reached in the field of Arts in this city of real universal spirit. We would thus fight not only traditional amateurs and stubborn conservatives, but also those pseudo-avanguarde and pseudo-futurist artists whom the generosity of Marinetti threw on the market all too carelessly, thus damaging real talent. So let us honour cubism, let us give it light and complete freedom to progress with a perfect international agreement of mutual consideration and cooperation, through a bold and generous renewal of intentions and of aims. I end by repeating that motto which means so much even in Art: «what is not dynamic is not static and what is not static is not dynamic». Are you listening, French and Italian avangurde artists?

stuff mosaics (trentino workshop)

a) scissors are skilful and stitches are invisible

Rome, 1916. Diaghilew, the famous impresario of the «Russian Ballets», orders a group of stuff costumes designed by the painter Larionow to the dress-maker who had made the plastic models I had ideated for the «Song of the nightingale» by I. Strawinsky. These theatrical clothes of very bright colors are made with a felt which Diaghilew had bought in Spain. At that time I devoted myself to drawings made with cut out colored paper and stuck on rigid cardboard. This was an elementary technique I used in order to economize (oil and water-colors were too expensive for my purse) and, in a short time, I had become quite good at using my scissors and cutting out flowers, animals and figures of all kind, and in pasting the smallest pieces.

With this decorative technique I had also planned the costumes for Strawinsky's ballet. But now, finding myself among precious stuffs of every color, my fancy is excited and I immediately decide to substitute my fragile polychrome papers with these soft and dazzling materials. Thus I make a few experiments of panel with stuffs pasted on card-board. I soon realize, however, that it would be best to use a sewn mosaic applied to a canvas held tight by a loom.

After the Roman period of the «Russian ballets», I go to Capri where, with gay precious materials and thanks to Rosetta's diligent and loving co-operation, I work a first group of experimental tapestries. As it always happens when experimenting something, also this attempt of mine has its faults: irregular stitches and imperfect joining of the stuffs. However, the coloristic result is attractive and the geometrical stylization of figures and landscapes meets with approval. I may rightly say that in the earthly Paradise of Capri, the fairy dream of my tapestries was born and realized.

The first figurations are inspired by the Capri landscape: boats, flow-



rural perspective - (oil 1914) property private collection milan

f. depero



mulatto of harlem · (oil 1945)

f. depero

ers, costumes, sea, rocks, fish. Capri was not only a delightful and restful stay, but also a rich fountain of inspiration.

While I am planning the « Plastic ballets » with Gilbert Clavel, Rosetta works at the loom, tacking and sewing the first tapestries, or rather, the first pictures in stuff I had cut out. The experiment gives promising results. I happily dance around, I radiate gaiety. I am convinced I have found a practical solution for an unexpected and easy future. I turn towards the wide Mediterranean blue and, with a deep sigh I tell Rosetta that the nightmare of hunger would never more cross our path and that I had at last pricked the black clouds of our uncertain future with sharp scissors and vibrating joy. I prophetically promise to change the small pieces of polychrome stuff into wonderful banknotes of a thousand lire. The years go by, joy and sorrow come and go, but the miracle comes true. This is the brief act of birth and the christening of these Italian tapestries which, little by little, brought me the success I had hoped.

b) fantastic ride

The town of Rovereto, martyred by four years of war, is coming back to life, more smiling and beautiful than before. After the armistice, in 1918-19, all the destroyed zone is vibrating with the work of reconstruction. In a tiny flat of Via Vicenza I give birth to my first humble workshop. Via Vicenza is the high-road to Vallarsa: zig-zags, bridges, galleries and ravines on the torrent Leno, sometimes gay and dancing, sometimes muddy and dishevelled, sometimes dry, bony and whitish. The landscape of Vallarsa is varied, with steps and terraces, scenographic, with backgrounds of powerful rocky prominences and of indented Dolomitic pinnacles, among side-scenes of vineyards and bushes, with small villages, tiny churches and steeples set like domestic sunny pearls. Bluegreen landscapes in spring; dust and breezes in summer; wind serenades and oblique snow-falls in winter.

In the small house, in a room measuring a few feet, with a few chairs, an easel and some looms, I improvise my work-shop. I, my wife, a needlewoman and a gold-finch make up the whole family. The gold-finch used to warble all day long, but, one nasty morning the cat caught it and my wife buried it in the orchard with loving hands. The cat smelt it, dug it up and cruelly lunched with it.

I begin my work with poor means and little material. I achieve a few tapestries and some plans and then I rush to Milan. « You landed like a vulture » said my poor friend, the aviator Azari: good flair and tenacious search till a concrete result is reached. Then I return to my Alpine nest, to my growing work-shop on the sunny terrace of Via Vicenza.

During one of these trips I meet Umberto Notari, the great writer, a man of talent and of many ideas, a generous moulder of young

energy and an artistic Mecenate. Notari is delighted with my first modest tapestries and gives me an order of one measuring more than ten square metres. And so my « Fantastic ride » was born.

August 1920. I rent a large flat in one of the old beautiful palaces of the town in Via Due Novembre, the first street of Rovereto to have been kissed by the Italian flag. I will here mention the strange coincidence regarding the famous Neapolitan painter Solimena who, in the seventeenth century, used to paint in the largest room of this flat. This latter room, measuring eleven metres per nine, and five other rooms satisfy my boundless operating enthusiasm.

As soon as I enter, I feel stunned, as after an anxiously lived dream. I see a medianic perspective of many, many hands, a crowd of women bending on the looms, silent and busy with their magical work. The atmosphere seems peopled with parrots and other fabulous birds. Amusing masks and gipsies make them fly at the harmonious rythm of a gay chromatic music. The landscapes are tropical; flora and fauna abound. Fairy spell of invented gardens; silvery waters with phosphorescent fish. Even mechanical fauna looks like a new metallic Arc of twentieth century Noah.

I have the exact sensation of the weight of many cases sent everywhere: to national and oversea markets. Here I decide to live, inaugurating a fruitful work-shop. Many orders, many exhibitions in Italy and abroad, both personal and collective. Much encouragement, but also many delusions and bitternesses, many falls and recomencements, sales and prizes, sequestrations and fame.

c) i am not depero, i am his agent

On Sunday, with my friend Franco, I visit the Turin Exhibition at the Stadium. I see a placard announcing the inauguration of the Section for clothing and furnishing. I ask prof. Ceragioli the modalities which I must follow in order to exhibit tapestries and cushions. I am kindly welcomed and helped. But how can I manage? My artistic and decorative material has been sequestrated by an Art Gallery until I can pay back the good bit of money I owe. I ask the manager to let me have at least the tapestries and cushions so that I might exhibit them at the Stadium and therefore have a chance of paying my debt. This favour being granted, I set out to look for a friend who can lend me a large carpet, a table and some decent chairs enabling me to set up a modest but decorous section.

I load everything on a cart and cross Turin on my way to the Stadium. On the eve of the inauguration all the exhibitors must stand near their sections; the award committee will make its round.

At nine o'clock I am there, dressed up and as stiff as a poker. I hear ten o'clock strike, then eleven, then twelvenobody comes. At last, at one o'clock, the jury enters. They seem absent-minded and do not stop at the Depero corner. I am getting more and more

stiff and patient. Suddenly, a lady of the committee leaves the group, comes towards me and asks me: «Are you Mr. Depero?» «No» I answer, «I am the agent of the Depero Artistic Firm» (You see, I had to save appearances and keep up the prestige of my name! You must know that, near me, was the Section of the famous Lenci House of Turin!) «Well, (says the lady) I advise you to remain here because the jury means to examine your works».

The committee is nearing; I am motionless. They look and examine, they ask me a few questions. I answer and illustrate the work and the products of the growing work-shop of decorative art of Rovereto. I am granted the «Great Honour Diploma». At two p. m., while they are closing the rooms (not yet inaugurated), a gentleman comes to me and says: «I am the President of the Italian Chamber of Commerce at Zürich and I should like to buy a group of your original cushions. Of course, you should empty them because they are too encumbrant» «All right. Come to my Hotel and I will let you have them». So I cash a fat wad of banknotes, get back my sequestered works, pay the heavy hotel bill and set out triumphantly for Rovereto.

d) fire... and not insured!

The hall had been destined to the futuristic movement, but my colleagues were not ready, owing to various reasons. So it was given to me and I did my best to fill it up with paintings, tapestries and plastics. The famous professor Gerewich, Superintendant to the Fine Arts of Budapest, praised me with flattering words.

To give better relief to the room, Umberto Notari lent me one of my tapestries belonging to him: the «Procession of the great doll». Every exhibitor was compelled to insure his products. Only one of them had not yet done his duty and his name was Depero. Every day the insurance agent would peep in at the door, showing me his large portfolio of black leather as if to say: here are the special forms to be filled! But hundreds of lire were necessary and I did not possess them. So I used to send him to the devil with the usual words: «I'll think it over ... I'll do it ... have patience ... come to-morrow».

The thing happened one morning when I was giving the last touches to the room. A high ladder was standing in the centre. On top of it there was an electrician fixing the wires under the lead pipes; the switches had not yet been set. Suddenly, from one of the lower pipes, a spark came out. I saw a flame. The jute took fire (I had been told it was unflammable); I rushed to the fire apparatus but could not make it work. At that moment, the usual insurance agent peeped in. I shouted to him to call the keeper, but he was nowhere to be found and the corridor was empty.

I felt hot all over and did not know what to do. The flames rose

lightly, taking away the hair of the stuff and beginning to damage the weft. Shall I tell you the miracle? I had built the ceiling with two planes falling towards the centre, that is, with overturned corners to which I had fixed a large lamp of geometrical points lined with paper. I guess these inclined planes caused the fire to stifle, for suddenly I noticed that the flames had automatically gone out. But the second miracle was that of not having succeeded in working the fire apparatus, for, otherwise, the acid liquid would have hopelessly spoilt what the fire had not destroyed. Shouting wildly, I sent away the insurance agent and made my way towards the restaurant for a frugal meal. For two months, I suffered of nervous shock and I still have a deep mistrust for electric wires capable of short circuits. And also, I will never again borrow tapestries.

e) another miracle

I must go to a factory to discuss the making of a work. On the way back, I am in a car with the driver of the factory and a small friar. During the short drive we speak of a curious subject: discomfort, hygiene, esthetics and morals of bicycle riding women. The argument has been suggested to us by the sight of hundreds of working women returning home from the various factories spread in the valley.

As soon as I reach my gate, I find some good news in the letter-box: an order for a large tapestry for the new villa of Umberto Notari in Rome. I catch the first train for the Capital. I take the necessary measurements, decide on the price on which I get a good account and state the date of delivery. The work consists of 25 square metres of tapestry to be made in a month and a half, using the technique I consider the quickest (possibly in felt). I toss in my bed during the whole night and the next morning I mean to give back the money and give up the order.

Suddenly, I have an idea. Why not make the large tapestry with the help of a machine? This thought gives me courage and I quickly set out for Milan. But here, another blow is awaiting me: the stuffs I need are no longer on sale. I phone a factory of the Veneto in order to ask for the necessary materials. The answer is vague. It is pouring with rain; I am tired out; I catch the train for Vicenza. At last, I find what I am looking for and, through Vallarsa, I reach Rovereto with my precious parcels.

Meanwhile, many days have gone by. Canvases, designs, stuffs, scissors, extraordinary work, extra hands, my work-shop is a busy beehive. My sisters order in Germany, through an agent of Bolzano, a machine for the panels. But it never comes and the days slip by. Therefore I rush to Bolzano to inquire and I hear that the machine has been stopped at the Customs and that I must wait a long time

before its delivery. I decide to buy a larger one which I find in a warehouse and I set to the finishing work of the large tapestry. Sometimes I think the machine work is excellent, other times its work does not satisfy me. Straight lines come out very well, but curved lines are unequal and indented. Finally, after a quick and careful experience, every technical secret is revealed and work proceeds rapidly. The date of delivery is fixed for the 26th of the next month and, on the morning of the 25th I arrive at Rome with the 13 details composing the whole panel. The work is perfect. At six p. m. of the same day, my tapestries have been definitely fixed and they shine in the orange room of Umberto Notari. The great writer is pleased and happy and he treats me to a wonderful dinner at the Hotel Excelsior of Via Veneto.

The large panel represents a train of gigantic lobsters, of frisking fish, of playing cards (jacks, horses, kings, spades, hearts and diamonds), of fantastic vases, of rare birds, of costumes, of food and of tropical plants.

Allow me to say that, considering the very short time I had at my disposal, the slow and difficult technique of sewn mosaic, and the hugeness of the tapestry, this episode represents a true miracle of speed.

f) paris - 1925 - tapestries for the grand palais made with one single eye

At last, Marinetti has conquered a practical victory: an important financial help to the futurists who will exhibit their works at the World Exhibition of Decorative Art in Paris. Now Marinetti has settled down in Rome and so I set out for the eternal city. In the new dwelling of the leader of Futurism, the walls are colored with light and bright colors. Family keepsakes, futuristic works and a rich library are placed in good order. His wife is a writer and a painter and his little girls are lively.

Finally, after many hopes and delusions, we get a good deal of money. This time my wallet is full. (How rarely this happens!) I catch the train for Rovereto happy and content. In my compartment, I find my friend Gigino Battisti, the son of the Martyr. As we are nearing Arezzo I begin to feel something itching above my left eye. I ask my friend whether he sees anything on my skin. His answer is reassuring: just a tiny spot and nothing else. At home, after a sound sleep, I wake up with my forehead covered with spots. A chemist recommends me an ointment and after three days, the disaster breaks out. « Erpes Zoster » at the left trigemine.

For two months the doctor visits me twice a day: boils, sores, scabs, terrible itching from my eye-brows to the whole head. One eye shut, bed, complete seclusion. In these conditions I must create large tapestries, plastics in wood, and organize my work for the imminent

Parisian World Exhibition. Peace in my wallet, but hell in my mind: it is hard fate always persecuting me.

The illness might spread and become deadly. But after two months of careful treatment it stops, heals up and is over, leaving a deep corroded mark on my fore-head. I am ready to start for France.

h) a few letters

I have the pleasure to announce you that the Prize Jury of the Ist Biennale of Decorative Arts of Monza, consisting of Leonardo Bistolfi, President, of Dr. Tiberio Gerevich of Budapest, of Monsieur Albert Goumain of Paris, of the painter Lionello Balestrieri and of prof. Pasqui (Directors of the Industrial Artistic Institutes of Naples and Venice), has granted you the HONOUR DIPLOMA. In communicating you these honorific news, I congratulate you heartily and will let you have, as soon as it is ready, the official document of the prize granted you.

Milan - 1923.

The General Director:
GUIDO MARANGONI

We are glad to communicate to this Firm that the jury of the Cushions and Lamp-Shades Exhibition, in order to acknowledge the merits this Firm has acquired in this artistic-professional field, has decided to grant to it the Great Honour Diploma. We beg you to accept our heartiest congratulations.

Turin - 1922.

Yours sincerely

Prof. E. CERAGIOLI (President)

I have the honour to inform you that the International Jury of this Exhibition has granted to the works presented by you in the Italian Section:

for Class 26 (Placards-art of the street): HONOUR DIPLOMA

for Class 13 (stuffs): GOLDEN MEDAL

for Class 16 (toys): BRONZE MEDAL

for Class 14 (art of paper): GOLDEN MEDAL

for Class 15 (art of wood): SILVER MEDAL

These distinctions are included in the Official List of Awards published by the General French Commissariat who will let you have in due time to awarded Diploma

Paris - 1925

The General Agent: Sen. TEOFILO ROSSI

En contestación a su atenta carta fecha 20 de octubre ultimo, tengo el gusto de participarLe que pagué por su tela cubista (tapiz) la cantidad de cinco mil cuatrocientos francos (fr. 5400)

Muy atentamente de usted

Paris - 1925

JOSEPH FRAIZOS

(El Ministro de Cuba en Portugal)

rosetta's raviolis

After six months of hard experience, finding my way at last in the great metropolis, having learnt a few words of English and having understood American conventions and methods, I take on a secretary and intensify my work of introduction with methodical stubbornness. But in spite of all my efforts, after a few months I still find myself in low waters; also the unexpected financial crisis and the fall of stocks and shares of 1929 have a sudden bad influence on my work. Revoked orders, little artistic interest, delayed payments.

I discuss things with my wife and my secretary. How can we manage? How can we face this dramatic crisis? The mind thinks out every possibility; fancy is at work. My secretary is convinced that the best way is to insist methodically; she is not alarmed or frightened. We must wait for better times, be content with modest works of no importance, intensify our attacks and hold on stubbornly and happily. No uncertainty: every day one step forward. She is of German origin and her parents arrived in America without a cent. Now they are the owner of several apartments, but her mother keeps on travelling and buying and selling houses and estates. Her sister plays the piano in home parties and in public, while she, my factotum, drives her own car and is content with a small percentage on the poor business she succeeds in bringing through.

Our common efforts are scarce. The disproportion between what we sow and what we gather is discouraging. Hundreds of invitations to my studio are not accepted; hundreds of 'phone calls and of personal calls give no results. The citizens of New-York are hard, difficult and have no time for artists; « business, business, business! ». They rush here and there and think only of bargains gone wrong, of plans that fail and exasperate them. The mood is one, there is only one thought: the struggle for the dollar! Nothing else! But a bright idea flashes through my mind: Rosetta's ravioli! I say to the secretary: « what if instead of sending letters, showing plans and giving artistic advice, what if instead of offering paintings, tapestries, cushions and drawings, what if instead of annoying people with invitations to my studio to examine my works, we invited them to a free meal? » An Italian meal is always welcomed by Americans! An Italian meal is always attractive in this and in other countries!

Antipasto, spaghetti, risotto, soup or gnocchi, or polenta. Roast veal, stufato, chicken or baccalà. Stuffed tomatoes, fish soup, Milanese cutlets and birds with sage. Fruit, sweets and ice-cream, according to the season and the mood of the cook. The meal shall be completed by good home-made wine. The honest trap is sure to be welcome and our guests cannot refuse the invitation. I have discovered a way to make my works known.

My secretary approves my idea enthusiastically. I think I have hit the nail right on the head. Rosetta is willing to set to her work, feeling flattered to be able to show her culinary art and hoping that her co-operation might help to solve the problem of «living and resisting».

We ring up various people: Mrs. So and So, Mr. So and So, the Secretary of the X Gallery, the business-man Y; the art critic A, the merchant B, the patron of art C, the experiment is successful. Out of twenty invitations, seven people accept. They are enough to make up a nice table, not too noisy, where an atmosphere of intimacy allows to enjoy the wonderful dinner and, at the same time, to have a look at my works hanging on the walls. Almost always I effect a sale and get an order or a concrete proposal. The dinner expenses are more than paid back. Ideally, I make artistic, Italian and futurist propaganda.

These are the key-stones of that difficult moment and the providential secret to overcome also the terrible New-York crisis of 1929.

umberto boccioni and plastic dynamism

To-day we often speak of synthesis and of dynamism when talking of art, of painting, of plastic, of decoration and architecture, and even in artistic, literary, and political criticism we often find these words. We read about a synthetic style a dynamic interpretation, and about plastic rhythm, the color and form of settings and moods. Also in artistic works I have noticed a widely spread and deep search for nakedness, for synthetic landscapes and for more or less dynamic compositions.

Schematic views, muscles boldly depicted in contrasting rhythm and lights, dissected and constructed with anti-anatomical order according to a merely rhythmical and architectonical balance. I have seen them everywhere, in the paintings of Exhibitions and of Galleries of Modern Art, in wall placards and in the various fields of decorative art.

I have also noticed with great pleasure (as I was saying in one of these pieces) that abroad there are University lectures having as subject the study, the explanation and the illustration of «the painting of speed» as compared with realistic plastic: the style of machines and its influence on the plastic of to-day.



venetian gondolier - (oil 1927) property private collection milan

l. deperca



white pencils in black pen - (oil 1945)

J. Depire



1. defers

sonorous dock-yard - 1934 charcoal drawing - property provincial board of milan



cock in the landscape - (pencil drawing 1931)

f. depero

Sometimes, of course, futurists are quoted, but usually they are forgotten together with the first pioneer and talented revealer of these new artistic problems. Umberto Boccioni is forgotten, Boccioni the painter and sculptor who devoted all his toil, his instinct, his feverish strength, his passionate research to the haunting problem of modernity by all means, to the pure synthesis of color, to a formal, plastic and coloristic, revolutionary and complete dynamism. He discomposed bodies and objects and summed them up in their setting; he drew restless perspectives by disarranging real vision; he examined and moulded invisible forces; he analysed and solidified lights and gestures; he traced a new weft, a bold framing for a new plastic whole suggested to him by interpreted reality and by chaotic lived life. Too many artists are still painting, moulding and criticizing without having learnt the plastic and pictorial revelations fixed and demonstrated by Boccioni. The truths contained in his works are not chimerical illusions, spiritual transcendencies, utopistic and merely experimental; they are plastic laws true to life, coherent with time, full of novelty and opening wide the doors and windows of the future.

Plastic dynamism, created by Boccioni, is a concentrated starting point. We find in it formulas to be developed and applied, advice to be pondered, followed and amplified, cunning suggestions to be interpreted and made our own, blows and kicks, awaking artists and inciting them to love with an open heart, with a sharp and distant gaze and with mental and lofty elasticity the sure open way of modernity by all means. For the artist of to-day, modernity should be a holy word, a task of his conscience and it should be understood and faced in its inmost meaning.

Real, palpable light, convincing solidity, metallic style and moulded speed. Synthesis, conscience, industrial, human and mechanical competitions, radiophonic and aeronautical splendour. Too many artists still love shadows, routine painting, unprecision, static return, reconstructed museums. Boccioni's work violently advises light and dynamics as the eternal sources of life and of infallible truth. Light penetrates into every reality of nature and reveals its most hidden secrets. The solar spectrum contains every color and its magical prism is a fountain of infinite chromatic problems. In the sunlight and through the light of the spirit all the great artists and masters of the past effected inspired and lasting works; it is the same for speed, the cradle of dynamism. From it artists drew mimic inspiration and the magical track of their compositions. Light and dynamics were for Boccioni the infallible starting points of all research. He was a lover of impressionists and, following their way with investigating passion, with concreting will power and conscience, he drew light, by moulding it in its complicated reflections and planes, beginning a new luminous architecture. He moulded the light of the

sun, the rays of lamps, the penetration of a deep gaze. He seized a shining beam and transformed it into a plastic letter, thus creating a new alphabet for a wise language then all his own, now all our own, which taught, awoke and showed the way to the aspirations of many artists in the whole world.

Boccioni's revelations had a deep and decisive influence on all foreign avanguard movements. Boccioni was alive in the real sense of the word. Everywhere he spoke with passionate ardour. He wrote with violence and humor; he discussed with energy and exuberance. He used to paint in hotels, to write in coffee-houses, to discuss art along crowded city streets. He was an improviser, but also a scholar, a man full of will-power, an artist and a complicated man. The lectures he gave soon after his arrival at Paris and Bruxelles are still famous. These lectures were improvised in a strange kind of French, but they were projected with such passion that even the most indifferent public and the most hostile and unbelieving artists were attracted and convinced. Umberto Boccioni was, smart, pale: a fist of muscles, a bunch of will power. He loved both art and life with perfect ease and harmony. His work was feverish, stubborn, patient, tumultuous and investigating when he was at the easel; it was loud and polemic in drawing-rooms and art shows. His open laughter, his sharp wit and his strong fists are proverbial. He knew and respected the great of the past, but, at the same time he considered them with familiarity, intending to surpass them and being certain to succeed. He was enlightened by his unshaken faith and felt attracted by his glorious fate, conquering everywhere. The traffic and movement of huge cities excited him. All his work is full of luminous stuffs, of struggling crowds, of factories and palaces in construction, of crystals irradiating chromatic flashes, of steel frame-works and of cast iron gearings appearing and disappearing among clouds of smoke and elastic forces, in a setting thick and swollen with collective tumult, with salient forces and with tornadoes of busy people.

His painting: « The rising city », is an effective example of the dynamic interpretation of the power and life of a metropolis. It is of 1910. It belongs to the widow of Maestro Busoni and is still in Berlin. Skeletons of rising factories on a background of smoking chimneys. Colored frame-works through flashes of solid, irradiating sun-beams. In the fore-ground a sea of waves: abstract forces generated by the rumps of pulling horses and by the crowd advancing. A crowd of muscles struggling, fighting, seizing like hooks the high ascensional walls of the palaces absorbed by the sun. It is the storming metropolis. Fists armed with hammers and irons, vivified by solid haloes of will power and of space. Light is grasped in bunches. Aspirations erupt from the skulls, like colored spirals. It is a suggestive and convincing complex of life advancing and rising.

The noise and movement of a metropolis did not give Boccioni

shallow impressions, but real objective and abstract living forces, revealing structural and plastic laws, dynamic perspectives as yet unknown and novel sensations of drama. Basilar laws, revolutionary theoretical and technical principles: the simultaneousness of images; the plastic of abstract forces, exploding from a body in motion or from an intense experienced emotion; the plastic of speed; free perspective; the compenetration of figures with their setting. These were laws and forces which were already within us and that modern life has transmitted us, but which only Boccioni has been able to discover, to decipher, to clarify and to show us. By means of compenetration and simultaneousness, Boccioni wished to harmonise and unite near and distant bodies and images, the present and the past, the external and the internal, figures with their setting, night light and day light, graphical tales and the continuity of sensations, conceived with a sense of solid and transparent harmony. He gave in synthesis the plastic drama which takes place in us. He gave a palpable form to the fluid emanating from a landscape or from a figure during their changeable moods and expressions. In a word: a living continuity instead of the statics of a still motionless body made of dull matter. Boccioni moulded the salient advancing spiral of action in contrast with all other artists tied to the tormented analysis of statics. Here is the symbol and light of this great master who has grasped, joined and cast into indicating matter the eternal forces of life and the highest symbol of his epoch: the drama of speed.

speed

a)

Somebody once said that «speed», the axis of dynamism, is in art a transient element and a fleeting expression. I answer that speed, which in the old times was called «expressive gestures, rhythm, dramatic animation, life and so on», is, in my opinion the key of a modern work of art. The composition of a painting was and still is but a mass of colors, of planes, of forms, of volumes, of lights and of figurations which the artist tries to harmonise or to set in contrast, in order to obtain on his canvas a greater attraction of vision and a better expression of movement.

Speed, be it objective or spiritual, is an eternal source of life and of art. A long time ago, artists were inspired by a discobolus, by struggling athletes, by battles and duels, and these subjects were the favourite elements of their pictorial and plastic conceptions, of their great compositions. To-day, in perfect harmony with time and with tradition we are inspired by our busy world, by sporting competitions, by fast motor-cycles and motor-boats, by Atlantic air-raids, by the animated vision of cities, by motorized masses, by simultaneous figurations emanating from radio transmissions.

I think that everybody will agree with me when I say that art means life: a man is interesting for his quick muscles and for his living multiform aspects, for his living expressiveness, for his firm brain, for his creative forces; all that is inert has never been source of life and of art. Even nature transforms itself continuously, from sunrise to sunset, from the beginning of a year to its end, from the birth to the death of man, of plants and of animals, and planets move in space with divine cosmic motion.

Therefore, I do not consider motion a transient element to be neglected, but an eternal foundation of study and of inspiration.

b) at the wheel

Lying on soft cushions, protected by solid and transparent quilted shells, the external landscape may be enjoyed cinematographically, that is, in fleeting views following one another. The engine bonnet stretches forward its chromed breast, sonorous, warm to the touch, almost human. The engine beats with chronometric ignitions and our heart beats rhythmically, with unchangeable precision: a real engine heart, a well ordered intricacy of veins, of flesh and of pistons — blood, oil and petrol — flashes from the pupils and from the motor. Man grafted on the machine, steel flowing through the nerves and fever trembling at the wheel and at the steering gear. The forehead smokes and temples sweat. The air moves, vibrates and breaks while the car flies with cutting happiness. Shivering nostrils and rasant snout clearing everything away. The booming grates, ploughs and digs. Going up a hill, its steel teeth bite the ground, chew the sky and suck the road. Street-posts fly away, mulberry trees evaporate, fields and meadows shrivel up, while the atmosphere takes the aspect of a changeable, absorbing funnel.

The eye gazes at the vertex of the street triangle and quickly glimpses at the sides. The internal springs vibrate gaily and the hands of the dials tremble on the rising numbers. Striped crosses barring the way and black and white combs announcing a fatal curve, an invisible precipice, a deadly cross-road. Caressing hands of air, cold kisses of sharp wind and cheeks of loving sun. Aromatic ribbons of rural perfumes, solid happiness of the space embracing me and happiness of the machine carrying me away - gay metallic companion, elegant and bold.

c) neighing in speed

One of Umberto Boccioni's favourite subjects was the speed and elasticity of a racing horse. (Boccioni loved riding and this was also the cause of his tragic end). A large painting entitled «Elasticity», belonging to the Marinetti Collection, is inspired by a galloping horse. The elasticity of the tawny muscles vibrates in space and in

the landscape, rythmically expanding together with them. The neighing, the clouds of dust lifted up by the stamping of the hoofs and the perspectives and smokes of factories, create an atmosphere in which muscular power glides and jumps elastically. The legs, the tail and the neck are let loose in the wind like chromatic branches in liberty.

To-day, it is interesting to compare with this Boccionian painting of 1912, my painting entitled « Neighing in speed » and exhibited for the first time at the 18th Venetian Biennale, in order to establish the difference between two epochs and the tangible development reached in this field of stylistically aerodynamic plastic research.

In Umberto Boccioni, the « power-forms » are agitated, disordered and almost scattered, having a fragmentary, almost impressionistic pictorial solidity. In my painting, on the contrary, there is a whole of « powerforms » both of the horse and of the rider, reconstructed together in the impetus and in space. They are concrete forms of obvious speed, of moving figures happily cast into a single plastic design and body. We have no longer an animal analysed in his different muscles and in his disorderly explosion of strength, but the aspect it acquires during a quick gallop solidly and clearly reconstructed and recreated. With this painting I think I have succeeded in solving an obvious problem of organic plastic dynamism. This work can be understood at first glance, even by people who are not used and who are hostile to such artistic forms. The original oil painting (100 cm. x 70) belongs to the Collection of ing. Della Ragione of Genoa. An oil study of smaller size is exhibited at the Gallery of Modern Art of Genoa, while a charcoal study is owned by ing. Gino Martini of Rovereto.

esthetics of the machine

Some art critics have written that mine is machine-work and that the work of many avanguard painters is mechanically cold and boringly geometrical; they have written that machines have twisted the taste of man towards practical materialism which is degrading, business-like, antipoetic and antispiritual. I will not try to deny that there is some truth in these assertions and, besides, I do not care. But I wish to prove that machines have not substituted natural beauty and all known esthetic beauties with another kind of beauty, with a new taste and a new spiritual order as many maintain, but that they have simply added unusual splendours, they have given a brighter light to life and reality, they have vivified action and revealed unknown aspects; they have intensified the power of sight, of understanding and of expression, they have created a new conception, they have suggested a new style, more metallic and vitreous, but yet more resplendent.

And now, since we are discussing art and especially painting, allow me to move a step backwards and to quote the impressionistic movement, the artists of light with their cool and vivid expression of open-air pallets, who have enriched painting with air, light, transparencies, colors, tonalities and harmonies.

Well, after these spring-like revelations of the impressionists, after this healthy epoch of fluttering art, multicolored with smudged «macchiaiole» impressions, machines have called back our attention to an order of plastic harmonies, to a new order of esthetic values, to a discipline of lights and shadings, in a word, to stylistic splendour. For gearings, the perfection of pieces, lacquerings, joints, clock-works and indented wheels are functions and elements requiring great study and a specific style.

If to a mechanic, to an engineer, to a sportsman or to a businessman, machines have a merely utilitarian and materialistic value; if to some crystallized artists following the avanguard movement as simple investigators they only mean a number, I will not only say that machines have revealed their own metallic crystal language, but I will also maintain that they have enriched and remoulded our way of seeing and of understanding and, therefore, of representing reality. With better clearness, with more brilliant tonalities and shadings, they have given relief to more dynamic aspects, they have penetrated and dived deep into natural and abstract beauties as yet unknown.

Machines have suggested a new esthetics above their materialistic contents. Machines and precision and scientific instruments have helped to reveal mysteries and have lifted the spirit of research and of elevation to moving mystical heights and aims. Has not the microscope revealed to scientists amazing mysteries and diagnosis? Has not the engine raised man high up in space with dream-like speed and daring? Has not the telescope revealed new planets and astral worlds? Machines have not killed or stifled nature: fruit and flowers grow even if motors are booming. Machines have helped us to understand and enjoy nature with greater intensity and a wider mind. Surgeons, technicians, aviators and sportsmen love their machines and their instruments as if they were made of flesh and blood. Thus also new artists, above veristic reality, above mechanical materialism, see in machines a new lyrical essence, a magical union of nature and machines, revealing a style of the future and of esthetic generating renewal.

rome - 1915. the hat flutters in the air

Times of anxiety and of poverty. Work from morning to night with an empty stomach and excited nerves. There were no real meals: in the morning a little milk, and the evening he small paper bag

which Rosetta used to bring me after her tiring day. Nevertheless, my artistic zeal was at its highest and my wife succeeded in sparing a few coins.

Rosetta needs a new Summer hat. She has seen one in a window which would be just the thing; of course it is very modest and costs little. Collecting her hard earned savings, she reaches the sum of eight lire. Now the purchase is made and she is happy in her large brims, with her thick dark gold hair harmonising with the straw-yellow of her new treasure.

Roman sun, soother of many miseries; Roman sky, consoler of many tears; streets wide so as to give breath to many anxieties: my God bless you who have given me the strength to hold on and to overcome this hellish beginning!

Rosetta is dressed in white and is standing near me, leaning on the parapet of the large bridge. On the right, the Palazzo di Giustizia is towering. Further down, Castel Sant'Angelo stands out darkly in the golden air. Below us, the blonde Tiber is calmly flowing, dotted with the gilt reflections of the yellowing leaves. Suddenly: ironic, cruel, wicked, the wind seizes her hat, and she is left with stretched out arms and wide open eyes, stifling a cry. After a few mad flights, the hat turns towards the river, flutters in the air and lies down on the waves.

Poor eyes full of tears!

Now the waves almost cover the hat; it follows the slow and undulating current until nothing is left but a small yellow dot smudged by the reflections of the water and of the light. But that dot is reflected in Rosetta's pupils, it melts and grows into a tear, while I burst into an apparently offensive but unconscious laughter. However, the laughter was tender and, therefore, it was forgiven.

autonomy in the source of lights

One of the principal elements rendering a pictorial work of art original and vibrating with its own light is autonomy in the source of lights. The natural guide of a single luminous source offered by the subject is, in my opinion, conventional. I believe that artists should have complete freedom in the choice of lights, in illuminating bodies, objects or landscapes with the free wish of creating an independent luminous atmosphere. Lights, shadows, reflections and shadings should, in my opinion, act in the same direction and for a concentric function: that of bringing towards the centre of the painting or towards the backbone of the composition a luminous order suggested by instinct and necessary to plastic efficacy. The artist should follow an organic distribution for the good of the contents and not for the good of likeness. Lights should act on the

work like many forces, setting in motion and giving life to each one of its elements, thus obtaining an animated continuative relief and also co-operating with great efficacy to the character and style of the work.

Lights from above, from below, from the left and the right side; frontal lights or lights emanated from the single details or projected magically from hypothetical centres. The work should appear as if it had risen from an imaginary stage, it should be animated by an unreal imagination and will and vivified by lights having the power of carrying the on-looker to the centre of the vision, attracting and transporting him to the magic unreal world of art, to dream the dream of the artist.

viareggio 1919

a) trips northwards, southwards, eastwards and westwards

I have been asked to Viareggio: I wish to leave Rome and get a change of air, so I accept and arrive at this fine sea-side resort where I am given a personal room in a collective Show. New acquaintances and new delusions. We struggle through the summer, but winter is threatening. We live in a pretty cottage costing a very small rent, but we have nothing on which to live.

To make up for it, we feed on sunshine and sea. In the magnificent pine-wood of Viareggio we spend shady afternoons and Sundays of delightful peace.

We are living the terrible times of the « spagnola » (the after-war epidemic 'flu) of collective panic, of silent retreat in one's own home, of the dramatic nightly transport of the dead. But I am mad and edged on by need; so I wander around and travel everywhere in order to sell a painting, a drawing or a cushion, in order to get to know more and more people, reveal my aspirations and earn my living. Work and travel are my daily alternatives; to stop means to die.

From Viareggio I go to Rome: Exhibition at Bragaglia's in Via Condotti. Here also the « spagnola » is raging while I peacefully sleep on a sofa of the Gallery, using a carpet as blanket. Miraculously, I do not catch the infection.

From Viareggio I rush to Milan and make some acquaintances. I get there all dressed in white as at the sea-side and find a thick fog covering the city. I was the only summer citizen, frightfully out of tune. People stared at me. But I succeeded in selling a few things and my address-book was filling up. Slowly and with great effort, I was walking on.

From Viareggio I rush to Genoa. Another Show: the collective futurist Exhibition at the Moretti Gallery. I give a first lecture which brings me quite a bit of money. The night of my speech I get glo-



f. depero

profiles of africa - (charcoal drawing) private property - bergamo



cocks and hens - (charcoal drawing - 1938)

f. depero



depero's tapestry work-shop · rovereto - 1927



pelicans tapestry - depero 1921

riously drunk, with « free-word » explosions dedicated to lamp-posts and tram-cars. My wallet has suddenly disappeared but it was empty for I happened to keep my money loose in my pockets. Providence had forgiven me and protected me!

b) the feast of the rope

I don't know whether it still exists, but the idea of this traditional Viareggio feast is quite original and offers a gay and happy moving crowd. Everyone goes to the pine-wood with a snack and a rope, probably in order to hang monotony and swing peacefully. We also go, with our modest basket. The forest is perfumed and cool. Its trunks are thick and straight; therefore it is easy to set up a swing and soon the whole place is swinging happily. The crowd rises and falls: children and old people, women and girls flying through the air. It is a fair, oscillating like the waves of the sea, glimpses of which are peeping among trunks and branches. Legs, laughter, toasts, laces and songs twining and fluttering, coloring with joy the green background of the magnificent and peaceful park. An original feast, a Latine rite: dinner in the open air and joy in common. Unforgettable.

c) frogs

Also the summer evenings are delightful in the Viareggio country. I nostalgically enjoy the scattered concerts of frogs ranged along the banks of canals and of brooks, harping the infinite phonic scale of the space brimming with stars. The concerts are well in tune. Croakings of every tone and distance: guttural in the near-by waters, xylophonic and shrill in the distance, querulous and lost in every direction. Beats, pauses, recommencements, touches and murmurs, mass ascents, gurglings, and masterly fugues. Sheer delight. Thus, with a nocturnal walk to the sea or to the pine-forest, I alternate my passionate pictorial work and my search for daily bread.

paris - 1925 - on the roof of a taxi

I am in the waiting-room of the Grand Hôtel Paris. Marinetti, Prampolini and Poznansky are with me. This Polish gentleman is organizing an international exhibition of avanguardie and contemporary art. He turns to me and asks whether my works for this exhibition are ready. I am very surprised at his question and answer that neither his agents nor my colleagues had let me know anything about this show. I was rather annoyed and almost gave up the idea of exhibiting something; then I changed my mind and although I had only a fortnight at my disposal, I accepted the belated invitation and

locked myself in my hotel room. There I painted a large picture: « Cyclist, fast train and the inside of an inn, simultaneous ». When the painting was still wet, I carried it to the Gallery on the roof of a taxi, a few hours before the opening. We were two in the car; one to the right and one to the left, holding the picture on the roof with frozed hands. There was a strong wind and I could see the painting swelling. I was afraid to see it suddenly fly over the bridge, in the Seine or along the boulevards. But fortunetaly I arriv-ed in time to place it triumphantly among a group of drawings.

b) a synthetic sculptor

Together with the painter Prampolini and the Russian woman-painter Idelson, I visit the studio of the Rumenian sculptor Brancusi. It is a peculiar shed, half way between a wind-mill and wood-cutter's barrack, enormous, crammed with trunks of mahogany, of chestnut, of hard exotic woods, roughly cut and facetted. Huge discs of stone and cubes of marble give one the impression of a wind-mill in ruins or of a warehouse miles and miles and miles from the city. But we are in the centre of Paris.

He exhibits much and is much discussed; his stylizations are exasperated. A head, the nude of a woman, a chicken are expressed with simplifying plastic as a single synthetic involucre having the shape of an egg, hardly differing one from the other. They are of marble and of wood, very polished, shining, pleasing the eye. I like very much the bust « La princesse », a portrait of gilt bronze of a Russian noblewoman: breast, neck and head are synthetized in a phallic mass, brutal and shocking, which gave the author much popularity.

sonorous dock-yard

In my volume of 22 drawings published in 1944, I think that one of the most convincing examples of dynamism and of plastic sonorousness is given by the pen drawing entitled « sonorous dock-yard » (table N. 21). The vision is clear: perspectives of machines, fragments of iron, projection of vessels and of instruments, men at their work.

The whole drawing is dominated by concentric waves, by arched emanations giving to the composition a sonorous character and to the atmosphere a rythmical and musical construction. Thus the phonic or, rather, noisy element is predominant, it covers material elements, it becomes part of them and emanates from them, constituting a logical and representative unity. This is, after all, quite a natural vision, for, when we enter a dock-yard or a factory, we are struck by the noise, by creakings, hummings and hammerings which may be deafening or low but which always follow a certain continuous or alternate rythm, according to the factory or dock-yard.

The phenomenon has an abstract sensitive character; the artist immediately grasps it and tries to represent it. This is what I intended to prove with this drawing and I hope to have succeeded in convincing even those people who are less used and less inclined to these forms of interpreting art.

the metropolitan mule (new-york)

The dolomites of the skyscrapers hush their towering heights. The grey and violet veils of high smoke gradually shade the rising planes and cut out rocks. Up above, the silvery pinnacles flash, and the golden domes radiate, while flags dotted with stars flutter in the wind and the vertical walls of mountain bee-hives make one dizzy. The paths going up these babelish mountains are hard and painful. The way to the offices is steep: harsh faces, closed doors, snubbing answers, bitter conversations and useless toil. The internal landscape is monotonous: papers in heaps, continuous ticking of typewriters. Rustling of wind-blowing elevators aspiring and plunging the black human tide like powerful pistons. It is a tide of millions of insects, swarming, biting, penetrating, coming and going in procession, climbing, stopping and recoiling. They rush from house to house, they fall and stand up again, they fight and strike, hungry and thirsty for light, for bread and for a piece of gold shining up above among the pinnacles of this deceiving earthly paradise.

The ascent makes you dizzy. A mysterious fever edges on the animal-man to the conquest of those fragile summits. He climbs, facing precipices, he walks along dangerous turnings, he rises among the crumbling of avalanches and the booming of ruins. Now and then he finds a large terrace of high, deadly solitude. In no other part of the world one can feel lonely and lost as in New-York: the language is different, life is different; faces, hearts, mouths and wallets are strongly cuirassed.

Metal in the streets, in the houses, and in the soul. The poor mule struggles along and advances step by step, stumbling at every stone, at every red brick, among iron cages, slipping on costly crystals. He advances thanks to the will-power of his starved muscles, fixing his hoofs on the asphalt, resisting to the violent human gusts blowing down from the vertical alpine walls. He advances along his narrow path, looking for a vein of gold, for the dreamt of mugget, for the seducing futter, for the comforting grain. On the permanent leaden sky, a flash of riches. Hawks, ravens, owls and human vultures flutter their wings and offer, with their croakings, deceitful traps. The thoughtless mule is seized and devoured.

Now and then, at the sides of the hard path, a bunch of grass appears; it is a clod of hope, a handful of dollars allowing rest, a short bivouac, and giving the necessary strength to begin anew. And

then, kit-bag in his heart, bridle on his nerves and iron on his feet, the mule starts again up along the rocky paths, among the apocalyptic visions of the unattainable Babel.

But now paths have multiplied; they mingle and make one lose the way. The earthquake is permanent, and the unexpected falls annul hard toil. The devil of gold is amused by this immense and hyperbolic human doom.

The splendour of a rich firm dies out and the mansion crumbles down. What was riches yesterday is to-day only ruin. From the bowels of poverty, new costly steeples rise: unattainable magic and enchantment. The small mule sometimes finds himself within deep black galleries: darkness, coal; he cannot breathe and fears to be crushed. Often it goes along bold and fragile bridges cast into space by the booming of the metropolis, from pinnacle to pinnacle, from cloud to cloud, from light to light.

Down there, demons roar fire and flames of speed, music and passion of joy and of pagan vertigo. They print and coin dollars and sorrows, fortunes and tragedies, distilling liquors and narcotics for the feverish bacchanal of human folly wanting to feed on gold, to dress with gold, to be intoxicated by gold.

The poor misurable mule, almost blinded, goes through curtains of smoke and fire; he limps among the roaring of machines and the hurricanes of people. And he still climbs in order to reach a haven of comfortable altitude, a bunch of real sunshine, a piece of sky, a nutshell of peace and a well-deserved handful of stars.

his royal highness „the christmas tree“ - new-york

It rises in front of the Paramount. It is a royal coniferous pine, coming from a large forest. Its height agrees with the mountains and with the rocky pinnacles of the skyscrapers that surround it. This huge pine-tree feasts Christmas in a decided metropolitan fashion: large polychrome lights hang from its branches and multicolored head-lamps are concealed in its foliage. Loudspeakers fixed on its trunk broadcast right and left the latest news of the day and the triumph of the shows performed in the near-by theatres.

Whole orchestras explode among the incandescent cones. Fires and luminous mixtures of artificial dawns and sunsets rise from this vegetal pyramid. It is an arboreous pyramid blooming on the caleidoscopic background of the publicity hurricane of Times Square. The wild wind of elevated trains, the roaring of crossing tramcars, the radent and low rustle of the human crowd wave around this monster of apocalyptic flora, around this gigantic idol, sonorous and mechanical, in whose shadows and leafy caverns invisible performances and musics dance an orgiastic saraband.

The miracles of this century explode from its knots, from its bark,

from its ancient lichens. It is no longer sunlight which awakens it, it is no longer alpine fog which caresses it with a silver veil; now changeable vamps of devilish phosphorescent cocktails pour over it carnival rainbows and lift it up, like a sonorous idol, over the booming chaos of the metropolis.

a homage to marinetti

Marinetti is one of the rare examples that may be found in the history of a poet who devoted all his oratory enthusiasm and all his artistic prodigality to the notoriety of other people's talent. Usually an artist has hardly time enough to create and protect his own art and to earn his daily bread. It is true that Marinetti's ample means allowed him to ignore the nightmare of hunger; but the easy circumstances in which he lived might have caused him to forget all about other people and to write comfortably and peacefully his own novels, poems and manifests.

On the contrary he loved to defend Italian talent and especially that young exuberant talent which is everywhere mocked and derided, despised and ignored by the misoneism of stereotyped bearded professors with a dozen letters after their name. Italy does not possess the Transvaal mines, but it does possess inexhaustible mines of genius. One must find it, discover it, and make it known. Marinetti began and passionately developed this awkward and difficult apostleship. He called around himself the most promising artists, those who were longing for novelty and were endowed with constructive will-power: Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, Sant'Elia, Luigi Russolo, Balilla Pratella, Carlo Carrà, Ardengo Soffici, Aldo Palazzeschi, Severini, Buzzi, Cavacchioli, Armando Mazza, Govoni, and many others. They all joined together in order to wake up, with violent means, Italy and Italian artists who were fast asleep on the soft mattresses of the glory of the past.

Thousands of lectures; thousands manifests; thousands of battles and thousands of exhibitions. Blows, shouting, kicks, boxes on the ear, new-laid eggs and rotten ones, potatoes and tomatoes, shoes and clothespins thrown at people's head; flights of chairs and of stuffed animal heads; violent unforgettable struggles in the squares, in the streets, in artistic clubs, on stages. All this war orchestra for art woke up those who were sleeping. The new creed was: «We have had enough of plagiarism, of imitation, of the exaggerated glorification of the dead. We must rebel, react, create, invent and, above all, defend the living». Animated by these ideas, this group of fertile talents headed by Marinetti began in 1929 its hard struggle. Marinetti wrote a motto summing up the programme of every futurist: «Forward, lest we rot away» (*Marciare e non marcire*). Marinetti commanded optimism by all means, this being an infallible arm and a necessary support for all heavy and tiring tasks.

Every exhibition was a struggle. Every performance a thunderstorm. Every lecture a hurricane. Marinetti shouted his encouragement: forward, forward; have strength and faith! His round blood-shot eyes grew larger and sprinkled fire, his nerves vibrated electrically. He was an engine under pressure panting within his hard collar damp with sweat. His words seemed to whip the stalls, pits and galleries crammed with people. Being proud of his futuristic madness to spite the wisdom of the past, Marinetti aimed his sallies in front of furious crowds with perfect accelerated shots. His oratorical qualities greatly co-operated to the quick clamorous propaganda of futurism in the whole world.

With his magazine «Poesia», he exalted blank verse, fighting against the usual poetical measures which he found trite and possessing a conventional, limited and rather boring musicality. His poetry is expressed with freedom of metre, with accelerated imagination apparently uncontrolled, with an orthographic and typographic revolution, thus breaking up common syntax and shallow logic.

Marinetti, with his unquenchable enthusiasm revealed also the «words in liberty» exalting the noise of modern cities and of factories. The images whirling in the human brain were expressed with the telegraphic and simultaneous style shown by life. Futurist poets expressed a great variety of lyrics, of temperaments and of subjects which would have been impossible with the usual means of traditional poetry. And the typographic revolution enriched poetry with variety. It became more emotional. Large words, small, middling and normal words. Broken up words, words repeated, lengthened and deformed according to the idea to be expressed. Words written vertically horizontally and obliquely. Words with letters lying down, turned upside down and in perspective. Words in spiral like the smoke of cigars. Words in flight like trains. Words as sharp as church-steeple and as swollen as thunder. Images written like rain through images as flat as streets, fields and meadows. Light words, scattered like snow-flakes or iridescent flutterings of butterflies. And then words booming like revolver or cannon shots.

It is not to be denied that poetry has the right to be expressed with lyric and graphic liberty. On the white or colored sheet it must live in the same magic disorder in which it lived. It looks like disorder, but it has a real inward order. Poetry is but an inward landscape which the poet is right in expressing like the painter, with all the planes and all the projections and musicality of art. Before the war, Marinetti amazed the high-brow crowds of Moscow and Petersburg. He gave thousands of lectures in Berlin, Paris, London, Vienna, in South America and in every city and town of Italy, always illustrating young and talented living artists. He spoke in every University, in every theatre, in the squares, in coffee-houses

and restaurants, in the streets, on trains and on ships — everywhere. He was rather tall, with a red, round face. His eyes were wide open, like a child mad with ecstasy. In his youth he had turned up mustaches, later he shaved. He was bald, metallic: a wonderful head of light. When he spoke, his fever was calculated like a machine-gun always hitting the target. He was good-natured. He walked quickly, wearing a bowler hat tilted on one side. He looked sure of himself; his cheeky and mischievous ease was very attractive. He used to eat, laugh and speak all at the same time with exhilarating and pleasant *sovrapposition*. Nobody could speak when he was there; he dominated, saw, valued and immediately expressed his opinion. Marinetti's many books have been translated in many languages. «Futurist loves», «Eight souls in a bomb», «Steel alcove», «How to seduce women», «The island of kisses», «Drum of fire», «Fast Spain and futuristic bull» are the titles of some of his novels. He also wrote comedies and dramas. A renewal of the theatre was decidedly necessary. So the futurists ideated the theatre of exhilarating unexpected exaggerations, of novelties and of surprises. Marinetti also improvised several theatrical companies that lasted long enough to perform futuristic shows. They caused successes, tumults, rejuvenating battles on every Italian stage and abroad. Several of these performances were grossly and suddenly prepared. It was not easy to create scenes and costumes with very little money, to put together antitraditional ballets, to find willing actors and dancers. It was necessary to find people having a theatrical intelligence, with an elastic and understanding mind. It was necessary to find dancers who did not mind concealing their fine thighs in tubes of cardboard in order to perform mechanical ballets and pantomimes. It was very hard to find all these things and elements. Notwithstanding Marinetti and his co-operators skilfully solved all these problems. In spite of theatrical mediocrity and of the raging public they succeeded in performing complete and incomplete works, revolutionizing the stage and heavy and trite theatrical ideologies.

To-day we are very glad to see that those futuristic «flops» have caused impresarios and actors to think and ponder. The companies of Pirandello, of Pitoëff, of Pavlova, of Salvini, the German, Russian and French Opera Theatres, the famous companies of Russian and Svedish Ballets, the vaudevilles and music-halls of London and New-York now sing, dance and perform in a modern atmosphere directly and indirectly influenced by Futurism. We must acknowledge its merits and not forget them too easily.

Marinetti is also to be remembered as the successful organizer of many avanguard exhibitions of painting, sculpture, architecture, decorative and theatrical art. These were not only independent exhibitions, but also national and international ones where, thanks to him, we saw the birth of new talents which would otherwise have

been stifled by traditional committees and by dishonest cliques always locking their doors to all that is young, new and bold. Marinetti succeeded in getting rid of them and he was right, for often futurists saved our prestige with their originality. At the Exhibition of Decorative Art of Paris in 1925, the Secretary of the Venetian Biennale, Vittorio Pica, declared that futurists saved Italy. Even for this significative success we should be grateful to Marinetti. He who defends and encourages art improves himself and makes more and more precious and productive that coal of which Italy abounds. We all know the sufferings endured by those who had the bold courage and the divine inspiration of revealing new ways, theories and discoveries and who would face the mystery of the Unknown at the cost of bitterness and delusion. Therefore let us honour Marinetti and let us be honestly grateful to him for having defended so many revealing artists.

In 1916, I invented a strange word:

„onomalingua“ (onomatongue)

With this word, mentioned at page 39, I wished to define my manner of poetical rudimental expressions and exercises which I wrote at that time.

These expressions are derived from onomatopoeia, from imitative humorism, from the «words in liberty» of futurist poets. I wished to interpret the abstract language of natural forces, for instance that of the wind, of the rain, of the sea, of the river, of fire, of all intimate emotions and sensations.

I intended to express in linguistic form the abstract word of birds, of flowers, of animals, of plants and of matters, and also that of bicycles, of tramways, of trains, of motor-cars and of machines in general.

It is an emotional and sensitive language which might recall that of children and of savages and the parodistic expressions and verbal exaggerations of music-hall comics. I might also recall the sudden transcendent expressions suggested in a flash by sudden and exceptional moods.

They are the words of leaves moved by the wind; it is the speech of the brook which flows, glides and jumps from stone to stone, from waterfall to waterfall.

They are abstract licences and verbalizations which, in my opinion, enrich poetry and the phonetic and expressive rhythmic efficacy of the poet. Notice: do not mix up imitative onomatopoeia with interpretative onomatongue!

To explain my meaning I will quote a piece taken from my lyric: «The cock». It is the final piece in which I inserted some onomatongue, interpreting and verbalizing the crowing of the cock:



fortune tellers - (depero tapestry 1922) property gualino collection - turin



trento - simbolic tapestry 1940 - property provincial board of trento



f. depéret

winter sports - (tapestry 1937) touristic tapestry worked for the e.n.i.t. offices - paris



tapestry . 1925

f. depero

«Dawn; the valley rises. The summits of trees and houses — the crowns of stones and bushes — the cheeks and tummies of walls — the thighs, the femurs and the shins of trees — the smoke of chimneys become golden and the dust of light sticks to their nocturnal dampness:

«The cock says:

«I like to walk on the crosses of enclosures, to balance on the poles of palisades, to invade other people's fields, to gorge myself with corn and hard sands, to drink the sky of puddles, to disturb the sleep of lazy dreamers:

*«caro deco dico — caro deco dico
cono Kekite co con checo
canko kicooo».*

«I advance leading my batallion of my harem of young hens and of crowds of chirping chickens:

*«cocco roccò cocco codeé cokiii cokiii cokiii
Kiii cokò caaa Keé cocòòò-cocòòò-cocòòò*

«The sunbeams, like redskin savages hidden behind the bushes and the trenches of the hills, throw bunches of golden arrows at my variegated feathers and at my breast, while I, like a brilliantined tenor, proudly advance in a morning bath of gold. The sun casts his bayonets of light and I radiate my feathered and colored cocka-doodledoos:

*«chi chi chi chekiii cogan
chè chè chè chekiii che chi conn
Kirocanchechi kechidorenca
coccodéé che-chii chi-chéé
dorenka Kikééééé!*

— Rome 1916 —

I wrote at this time several pieces of onomatongue, abstractly verbalizing various moods, with invented words and sounds. Of course, they caused surprise and laughter but also thought and meditation. Undoubtedly, their efficacy *depends on declamation* (as also all poetic expressions). One of the pieces which was applauded and understood was entitled «Tramway» and I wish to quote here a few lines of it, that is, my metallic greeting to the arriving tram-car, and his shattering machine-like answer:
My greeting to the tram:

*«Tlemmo tla, ti commi — viemme iiii — Bicaromm Tramm —
me com sai ti sto? Rissi, comissi, fussi — li to stei mei tleime
vroiii sioiii oiii sombosotrà!»*

The fiercely machine-like tram answers:

« Plommo — Plammo — Ammizir —

« Kin — Lissin — voissi — Stromirti — Tzing — Ogoolanga
— buli — tzi — Bum — Tom — Sbre comuganal — tzinghi —
longa — Tan — Klatan — Klogo — Sokrà — mak — tokrà —
Tikrù — Tukuiss — Quecc lucc — Tzau — sokripink — pingh
— fuingh — cocipingh — zifinghii and so on ».

For the time being, I consider onomatopoeia an expression of poetical integration co-operating to lyrical efficacy, and not a language to be used alone. I am certain of its power and of its further development; time and new poets will tell us of its future. I will again repeat that this expression is tied to declamation.

Mine was only an interesting experiment.

struggling with the futurist - 1924

The large drawing-room is triumphant with Oriental carpets, ancient and modern weapons, Egyptian and Arabian bronzes. On the low tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl there are piles of books and manifests, of homages and paper cuttings from the whole world. Gigantic metal butterflies with glass wings, radiate soft multicolored lights. The whole flat recalls the Orient, but it is also full of art, compenetrated with literature, invaded by international Press and by futuristic poetry and painting. Improvised order in sovrapposition and daily coming and going of artists and of Italian and foreign newspaper men. Invading boldness, real and doubtful talent; restless youth always knocking at the door and ringing on the 'phone. This is Marinetti's drawing-room, the most magnetic and exciting drawing-room of Italy at the Red House of Milan in Corso Venezia 61.

We are in 1924. We are preparing a new campaign. A group of artists, musicians, poets, painters and scenographers are gathered round Marinetti and the impresario. After a heated discussion we agree upon a definite programme and each one of us hurries to his own task. I must prepare the performance of the «Dance of machines» (idea by Depero and music by Casavola). While I construct the costumes and paint the scenes, two dancers practise guided by the musician.

The musician is satisfied and so are the impresario and the performers. I arrive on the stage with a basket of costumes. Costumes: tubular synthesis of humanised locomotive built with cardboard made supple by applications of linen. They are decorated with numbers in black and white. The heads also are concealed by masks having the shape of chimneys. These costumes are supple at the elbows, at the neck, at the knees and at the shoulders. The rest is rigid and shining. Movement is possible and quite easy.

Having opened my basket and shown these theatrical diving apparatuses, the eyes of the dancers flare up and cast surprised glances of indignation like four angry head-lights. They look questioningly at the impresario and then immediately resign their contract and take to their heels. We must search for other suitable dancers. Time goes by and every day new difficulties crop up. At last we find a new couple: another rehearsal and another angry flight at the sight of the costumes. The fair hair of Rodolfo, the impresario, stand on end and ask for help. But patience and tenacity conquer: a Belgian dancer and an American girl heroically face the artistic torture and the interesting experiment, dancing mechanically within tubes and cuirasses on the stage of 28 Italian towns.

On the opening night at the Trianon of Milan, we have the first accident: a Napolitan poet who preceeds my numbers with a «words in liberty» dissertation speaks to the public with colored and provoking expressions, taking more than the time he is allowed and thus causing a violent reaction of the public and threatening to stifle the poor dancers buried in the mechanical costumes and awaiting their turn.

Marinetti is urgently called. He says everything is going all right. In the public a quarrel breaks out between those who wish to see the performance and listen to the poet and those who want to disturb, react and interrupt.

Suddenly the scene changes. All our group lines up peacefully round Marinetti on the stage and from performers we turn spectators. We admire with attention and amusement the comical and alarming sudden performance offered us by our opponents and supporters. This scene (that was quite common during futuristic shows) is interesting and lasts a long time. As soon as the performance is over, we catch the train for Bologna.

eruption at bologna

The experiment which had gone off very well at Milan (the tumult was only a short paranthesis) is interrupted at half way in Bologna. The hostile eruption is almost apocalyptic. The hooters of factories have been carried to the gallery. Refined ladies with their irreproachable husbands in black arrive hand-bags crammed with weapons (beans, chickpeas, eggs and potatoes). And soon tubers, yolks and food of all kinds hail upon the stage as a mark of respectful homage, in spite of De Angelis, the brave impresario, who has succeeded in stopping at the door a few sacks of potatoes! The dear poet Cangiullo has his smart evening suit spoilt by running raw «zabaglioni» and a real terracotta saucepan breaks at the feet of Marinetti. Bricks wrapped up with silver paper whirl above our heads, shining like threatening comets. We receive the

order to stop the performance. We come out of the theatre between two wings of shouting public and we reach a coffeehouse where a new tumult breaks out: whistles, blows and shattered mirrors, light and darkness, boxes on the ear and fierce cries.

After this second performance in liberty we find refuge in a comfortable boarding-house where a large dish of smoking green «lasagne» is awaiting us. They represent the epilogue of this memorable performance.

at turin and further

We reach Turin: a few hours' rest and then again to the theatre for a rehearsal. With great difficulty we find a motor-cycle which is to accompany a flute player. It was still harder to persuade the flute player to allow his harmonies to be accompanied by the booming noise of a motor-cycle engine. Another discussion broke out with the theatre scenographer to whom I had ordered to fix the side-scenes I had colored above the frame of the sky. He answered me indignantly that during forty years of theatrical work he had never heard such a thing and that he would not obey me. I succeeded in convincing him after forty minutes of explanations and demonstrations.

Meanwhile a crowd of students demanded to enter at half price; others would not pay for their ticket at all. Thus the entrance to the theatre was crammed with people and, to make things worse the students set fire to our futuristic placards. This time our performance unexpectedly began in the open air. Turin, always kind and up-to-date, showed more form in the choice of its vegetables and carried to the theatre several kilos of chickpeas, round and easy to handle, which we swept away at the end of the performance. These peas also caused the American-Belgian couple to fall, so that we had to carry them together with Marinetti behind the scenes while the show went on. We had not foreseen this collision of locomotive-dancers with the co-operation of the public.

Thus fighting its way the heroic artistic company of 1924 continued its work through 28 towns of Italy: gathering flattering comments, enthusiastic applause, fierce disapprobation, ferocious assaults. On the whole it was considered an interesting attraction. A small heap of dirty dust and some twisted wire was all that was left of my locomotives; of the scenes, only a few multicolored rags.

raffaele calzini - milan

Depero has the temperament of a decorating artist and if we consider that decoration is the field in which futurism had the greatest influence and through which it became known abroad, we can realize the effort and the task of Depero in the futuristic move-

ment. He and Prampolini, though with different aristocracy and technique, are the exponents of that abstract and metaphysical taste which permeated many esthetic forms and expressions, both Italian and foreign. And this especially in the fields of wall decorations of advertising placards and of scenography.

We have noticed unmistakable traces of futuristic influence not only in the scenographies of Tairoff and Meyerbild at Moscow, of Piscator at Berlin, of the «Svedish Ballets» at Paris and Montecarlo, but also in the magnificence of the New-York Rockefeller Center. It is true that both Depero and Prampolini were more appreciated abroad than in Italy and their works had been noticed also by Picasso and by Lager.

.... Perhaps, of all Depero's qualities, his theatrical art is the most original and evident. We hope to see Depero's costumes and scenes accepted also by those large theatres which nineteenth century scenographic tradition keeps motionless on the rails of stubborn verism.

compenetration

We must leave the word «compenetration» in its plastic sense and in its boldest expressive meaning to those modernists who were the first to compenetrated objects and figures, the inside and the outside of rooms, near and distant figures, immediate touchable images and vague, distant and fantastic forms. The discovery made much noise and its boldness shocked many people, but the field of art was opened to wider horizons, as yet unknown.

The compenetration of images was the result of the visual and sensitive simultaneousness which had become sharper through the dynamism of modern times. Little by little our senses got used to quick life and movement, to think, observe and consider at the same time motives, elements and problems of every kind. Visual, graphic and chromatic power was awakened and multiplied thus placing the new artist in new conditions. If a normal man can, while speaking, quickly deal with different subjects and recall different thoughts, ideas and images without interrupting the logic of his speech; if a writer and a poet can exalt their piece or lyric with their own figurative language, animating them with comparisons, images, interruptions, exclamations and stylistic interpretations, (think it over!), why should we deny this interpreting licence and this wonderfully dynamic descriptive freedom to a painter? Someone may whisper: «this is trite stuff; avanguardism is no longer fashionable». I will then leave my subject for a moment and answer that to this day modernism has only stuttered, that it has only shown the experimental alphabetic beginning, that it must still concrete its classical and lasting language which will fatally develop with time and through the genius of

future artists. But of this fatal and certain development we shall speak elsewhere.

Compenetration which caused so much dismay is, on the contrary, such an elementary fact that I wonder how people can be shocked by it. It is like the historical fact of the first moving cinema on the screen at Paris: people laughed and mocked, they were shocked and unbelieving. Now I ask you: «Have you ever stopped in front of a shop-window in the street?» «Yes». «Have you never looked at yourself in it and seen your image compenetrated by boxes, books, toys and by the figures of passers-by behind you? This is an instance of a daily habitual effect of compenetrated images. The use of compenetration was immediately and cleverly exploited in the cinema especially in the first war films where a singing battalion leaving for the front passed in front of a weeping bride, and when she knelt in prayers in front of a sacred image she saw in the distance the vision of ghastly battles and of deadly assaults and raids. In the same way, the combatant in the trenches saw in his mind the vision of his fields and of his family praying for him who was fighting. To-day these instances of compenetration of images and distant visions appearing simultaneously have become so common in films that no one has anything to say against them; on the contrary they are considered effective and convincing. In easel-painting we are still rather uncertain, but in large allegorical wall paintings simultaneous compenetration is used with great ease and more or less talent, thus enhancing the dynamic conception of compenetration and giving the work a modern character.

Needless to say, also in this section of plastics there are various degrees and variety of interpretation. We have timid, easily applied compenetration; we have a deeper compenetration — free and stylistic, and we have also the highest kind of compenetration — physical, expressionistic and metaphysical, that is, daringly revolutionary and boldly creative. This last kind, however, is only for the very few endowed with genius and with integrating imaginative qualities.

I have thus given you a few notes on the much despised «compenetration».

points, curves, corners and waves

The point of the nose — the point of a church-steeple — the point of the pencil — the point of a turnip and that of the muzzle of a mouse — and also the point of a sunbeam and that of a thin sound are acute forms harmoniously sharp.

The hollow of a bowl — the sphericity of a thigh — the curve of a bottle — the turning of a road — the swelling of a cloud and that of the rosy face of a child — the belly of a barrel and that of a wine-seller — the roundness of a hill and the basin of a tranquil

lake are convex and concave harmonies of figures and landscapes agreeing with one another.

A flash of lightning, the gleam of an idea or of a skilful foil hitting the target — the shriek of a man falling in a precipice and the creaking of a trepan or the booming of an avalanche — the gash of a stain of sunshine on a table-cloth and the azure rent of a shadow on a face are sudden disharmonies of pictorial irregularity, of plastic discordance harmonious and revealing.

The curve of the sound of a violin — the curve of the waves of the wind — the flexibility of a whip in space — the sweetness of a voice — the quivering of a doubt or of a sea breeze, and vibrations of every kind moving the soul are abstract shadings, harmonising and spiritualizing reality.

Water pipes and bowels — the cylinders of canals and of poles of centrifugated cement — the smooth and knotty trunks of trees and the pleasant or unpleasant legs of girls — the solid or transparent volumes of smoking chimneys and of full or empty bottles — ceremonial top-hats — black sleeves, huge cigars and lined trousers are all values of cylindrical harmony: opaque, fleshy or translucent; vertical, horizontal or aslant. In space, under the water, in the street, in the house and under the ground they are everywhere faithful to the cylinder with severity of shading and geometrical style.

And also the corners of houses, of walls, of rooms, of furniture, the corners of light entering during the day and going out during the night, the corners of sinking shadows can be defined only as geometrical harmonies of space, of objects and of surroundings, enhancing, constructing and measuring the splendour which is around them.

favourite proportions and internal perspective

I hope no one will deny the freedom granted to the artist as to the choice of the subject, its composition and its free interpretation. It is the artist who chooses the frame of the landscape, the pose of the figure, the direction of lights and the setting of the composition, be it a «still life» or not. It is also he who decides on the technique which interests him most. And so far I hope everybody will agree with me: artists, cultors, amateurs and public. But to the framed landscape, to the pose of the figure, to the chosen lights and subjects, to the finished and represented composition, I take the liberty of putting a few questions, of stating a few considerations and of setting a new problem to be examined. This problem has been accepted and partly solved by avanguard artists and they will welcome and immediately understand and confirm it; it will

be discussed, blamed and perhaps refused by traditionalist artists and it will sound obscure and confused to the greater part of the public.

And here is the problem:

When an artist sets to the realization of a work, in front of a landscape, of a figure, of «still life», is his interest equally distributed among all the elements composing the subject? Is he not on the contrary attracted in various degrees by single details, by single elements, be they plastic, pictorial, rythmical, psychological, objective or abstract? Do not misunderstand me: we are always speaking of pictorial interest. What I wish to state is this: that there are emotional elements stronger than others, more expressive, more characteristic, which deserve to be made outstanding, to be interpreted with specific and predominant expressiveness or even transformed in their apparent aspect or displaced and brought to the fore-ground, joined or compenetrated with one another, even if at first sight they appear distant or contrasting. Consequently we have also elements of less importance which, when their turn comes, will be shaded, synthetized and even abolished. What happens then in this case in the soul of the scale of emotions, of impressions and of expressions? This does not happen only in the soul of an artist but also in everybody's soul, in a varied and different manner, according to the temperament of the artist or of the observer. But it is especially the artist who, being endowed with greater observing sensibility and sharpness and thanks to his specific professional task and technical training, chooses and gives relief to what interests him most, to the elements which have struck him most; with a greater plastic force and with more coloristic vivacity he makes outstanding those elements which characterize the subject and the visual and sensitive emotions it gives him. Thus there is nothing absurd, forced, literary and illogical. In the soul of the artist there happens a kind of personal emotional subsequence, a fact of inward perspective-alternate and agitated, a selection due to preference, an individual valuing of anti-naturalistic various and contrasting proportions. His composing and expressive sensibility is roused, a new strength enriches his skill, his temperament and all the factors influencing his expressive mood. In this inspiring pathos the artist composes and represents; he does not follow a flatly descriptive analytical narration, a more or less photographic illustration of sheer technique;; he boldly seizes the chosen elements, he adapts, stylizes, interprets and recomposes them according to his expressive fire, his esthetic taste, his warm passion and his skill and style. He represents with the means that are at his disposal, with technical freedom, with sudden perspectives, with pictorial cunning, with rythmical hazards and free harmonies; with fancy and inward continuity and with architectonic rigour. A normal eye is not able to see all this; it is



f. depero

costumes of the people (inlaid in buxus)



work-shop labour · (1933) glass window of the general post office · trento

f. depero

only the exceptional artist who can know and understand, thus boldly bringing to light sympathising proportions and psychological perspective.

I end with the paragraph:

„blessed be the god of artists!“

Is there a God for Christians? Is there a God for Mahomedans? Is there a God for the Chinese? Well, I will add that there is also a God of artists!

To fall in the fire when one is two years old, to land on a curved bar or iron, to break one's forehead and to keep one's sight, all these are miracles for the fate of an artist.

The wall is five metres high. Many stones at its foot. The peasant works the ground, sweeps away the stones and turns up the soil before sowing. The ten years old boy is astride the wall with an arm tied to his neck. Suddenly he slips and falls headlong. His body leaves a mark on the soft earth as if it was black snow. Smiling, the boy gets up unhurt and goes home. This was a real miracle for his long artistic career.

To have a violent «Erpes Soster» break out at the left trigemin (on the eve of a great Exhibition and with much technical and artistic work to deliver) and get up after two months in bed with unhurt optical nerves is a great miracle for a painter.

At 2700 metres, in a pitch black night with wind, snow and rain, to stand in front of a hermetically closed hut, to move some boards in order to get in and to have a heavy and sharp board crash from the roof on your forehead, two centimetres above your right eye, and yet to be left with your own perfect sight is also a real miracle for a painter who still intends to draw and to paint. Let me therefore thank the God of artists.

1928

To have five quintals of works and personal baggage loaded on a ship; to pay part of the heavy price of the voyage; to book your passage cabin and to have in your pocket less than half the necessary sum is not recklessness but only ingenuity for having believed solemn promises which were not kept. But it was a miracle for the artist who had decided to cross the ocean to find an unexpected kind-hearted Mecenat and admirer who offered to pay the rest of the passage on the waiting ship. Am I not right to repeat: «The God of artists be praised?»

To sit in front of the General Manager of a Shipping Company, to

propose an exchange of a work of art with a passage ticket (say from New-York to Genoa) and to get a refusal is quite a common fact, a circumstantial logical case, a justified and foreseen result. But to have the General Manager change his mind, «ipso facto» on the threshold of his office with the door handle in your hand, having given up all hope, was a real miracle for a European artist who wished to go back to Europe. Don't you think so?

A New-York, the subway is under my feet and the elevated railway above my head. Between the two railways there is the tram passing at the level of my feet and of the pavement. I see a tram-car and let it pass, but I do not see another coming from the other direction and therefore I do not bother to avoid it.

Arm in arm with my wife I imprudently cross the rails. The noise is deafening and it is a real miracle for an artist who loves the metropolis and even more his wife if he is not run over and cut to pieces.

Therefore, also in this case, I am justified in repeating my praises to the God who protected me.

It is neither strange nor interesting to hear of a young artist (may be newly-married) who has to do without a few meals. But the small delightful miracle happened when one night, as I was already fast asleep on an empty stomach, I heard the bell ring and I received the unexpected homage of a tasty cake and of a delicious bottle sent me by someone with whom I was only slightly acquainted and whose artistic opinions were, I think, contrasting with mine. While the bottle was given for three quarters to the husband and for one quarter to the wife with happy agreement and tender harmony. And also this time we did not forget to send up a grateful thought to the God of artists.

But the small and great miracles which make life fine and attractive to every man who is able to see, live and sing it, are endless. Foreseen and unexpected miracles and facts, pleasant and unpleasant, often delightful and exciting, often discouraging and exasperating.

But one of the greatest miracles of all which was not unexpected but which on the contrary required slow and hard preparations is the one I am living now, this new journey of mine to the States, loaded, as ever, with works and with hopes. It is a real miracle if one thinks of the astounding price in lire of every enterprise, of every preparation: baggage, trunks, cases, frames, glass panes, packing, travelling with comfortable and uncomfortable means, consular and customs permits, clean and dirty hotels, honest and dishonest people, cheap restaurants and expensive ones, tips, pauses, letters, telegrams and endless 'phone calls.

Unforeseen pleasant and unpleasant circumstances, days of feverish work and sleepless nights, lists, weights, measures, prices, sudden decisions and torturing lingering doubts, exasperating misunderstandings and philosophical pauses, restful wise pages of Lin Yutang, checks coming and going, difficult, diligent, punctual and fond translation, slow and patient linotypists, daily calculations getting more and more complicated..... and so on: the book must be printed and the day of my departure is nearing....

This also is a miracle: that of having brought to light this booklet of mine «nineteenhundredandfortyseven» for my reappearance in New-York «nineteenhundredandfortyeight». For this miracle I must also gratefully thank the Giacomo Bosso Paper Mills, that is, Bosso father and son of Turin who have ever been to me loyal friends and faithful admirers.

If you will find omissions in this booklet of mine, please do not blame me too much; if the God of artists does not abandon me I will come back to you with a sequel «nineteenhundredandfortynine», thus completing and enriching my long, hard, varied and colored progress as an artist.

For this time I am content; I hope to have satisfied readers and lovers of modern art and may this book be welcomed as a novel visiting card.



market of the low-town - n. y. (oil 1932) XVIII biennial of venice

f. depura

ploughing • (oil 1926)



J. Depierre



fortunato depero - painter and poet



nature alight - (oil 1936) property mattioli collection - milan

f. depero

WHAT IS THE BUXUS

Among the materials used at present for indoor-decoration, BUXUS is one of the most outstanding, practical and beautiful novelties!

- made in various colors
- washable
- almost unbreakable
- resisting every temperature
- odorless
- fireproof

Can be varnished and polished to shine like a piece of marble or crystal.

Applicable as wallcovering, door - and furniture panels - picture frames, matching individual taste and style.

BUXUS is produced by Giacomo Bosso paper-mills in Turin - (Italy).

to architects, engineers, furnishers and decorators!

We must thank rational architects who have swept architecture clean of remodelling and imitation, who have simplified masses and have returned to volumes, to planes, to elementary and formal line and construction. They have given renewed splendour to architecture, and hygiene, light and air to our new dwellings.

They have quite returned to the formal origins of geometry: to cubes, spheres, cylinders, pyramids and cones; to the elementary type of hut, house and temple. But here they have stopped, I think: for the basic and primitive forms in developing should harmonise with the climate, with surroundings, with the endless needs of civilization and of regions.

What I mean is that a station, a palace, a villa cannot and should not be alike in the North, South, East and West, at the sea and on the mountains.

If rationalism is indispensable for utility, technique and mechanics, it has little or nothing to do with art. Art is varied, inventive, corresponding to different tastes, countries and characters. Thus also architecture, which is the supermanifestation of art, should agree with the cultural and climatic needs and habits of a place. It is our task, therefore, to create a modern, original architecture of the present day and, obviously, also the necessary means to achieve it: the accompanying furnishing and decoration, that is, the complementary adornment of the house.

To-day we see the same practical, polished, rather comfortable furniture too simply used for dissimilar and contrasting purposes and places. For instance, we see metal chairs in public and private halls, in cafés, restaurants, offices and shops; every where we find the same cold hospitality and questionable taste. In my opinion, it is necessary to go back to the individuality of furniture, to its communicating warmth, to its lost personality.

And now we feel we are at the beginning of a happy solution of this problem by blending art with the work of craftsmen and by exploiting a new material: the BUXUS.

This material was not born yesterday; on the contrary, it has been in use for some years in one single color for lining furniture of twentieth century style. But we must admit that rational style, rather cold and monotonous, applied to furniture of easy geometrical plagiarism gave a limited relief to the material and to the furniture itself. An artist was necessary in order to achieve originality and specific individuality, and to-day we use with efficacy inlaid work, a means which is actually coming back to fashion everywhere. Naturally, we do not want to return to the simple ornamental, traditional, «maggiolinesco» taste, but to a modernly conceived taste destined to a specific task of innovation.

Let me explain: that inlaid work enriches furniture and rooms is quite obvious; it gives them life and it characterizes them with unmistakable apparel and style. If inlays are also colored and color is wisely used, they fill the house with joyous fantasy and satisfy everyone's taste thanks to their harmonious function. They satisfy children who love color and the world of fairy-tales. They satisfy girls who dream of blue skies and candour. They gratify grown-ups who have their ideal taste or their own concrete world, as businessmen, scientists, merchants, artists and all professional men who have personal likings and preferences.

Inlaid furniture and decorations enliven and exhalt with forms, colours and images every kind of place: from private to public, from snackbars to smart restaurants, from nurseries to grand dining-rooms, from fashion shops to libraries — continually varying in tone and motif, creating suitable atmospheres of psychological surroundings.

To this artistic and bold revival: «BUXUS» lends itself in the most eminent way.

let us renovate the nursery!

Children love color and fairy-tales and they are spell-bound and delighted in front of a novelty or a gay vision. In their small room, therefore, they will love to have colored inlaid furniture and walls telling wonderful tales.

The stylized figures will inspire them and invite them to dreams and to inventive drawings.

When a child tells, writes or draws something, he expresses himself unconsciously. Our new decorations will be for him a beautiful, vivid and precise source of fantasy. Above his bed and above his small writing-desk there will be artistically gaily arranged panels and inlays in BUXUS. They are lasting in color and material: always shining, clean and new. Every morning, before the child's eyes there will open the fresh window of his fancy awakened by our inlays. He will dream and draw puppets, dolls, colored birds, fairy castles, elementary machines, gaily painted boats and animals: butterflies and tiny iridescent angels, rythmical battles of small geometrical heroes and incredibles stories enclosed in a rainbow, revealed by our decorations.

Our grandfathers had heavy, massive inlaid chests and our children will have light, modern chests in BUXUS.

It is so! Our grandfathers of sound, domestic taste, of iron health and real love for their home, had heavy, massive chests inlaid with lions' paws and complicated with iron locks and secrets. Inside,

there was linen of rough flax, carpets, wedding dresses and jewels. The antiquarians of Europe still search feverishly for them and pay through the nose for them.

But we like novelty and modernity, we are saturated with our times and we devote ourselves to them with great passion. Our grandfathers will grumble, our fathers will disagree, but sons have their rights.

In the enthusiasm of living and of creating a personal sphere of their own taste and of aesthetic modern order, they will require original chests, splendidly inlaid with color, modernly adorned, fanciful. Chests looking like marble or metal but consisting of a light, lasting and fluid substance.

A chest inlaid in BUXUS is an elegant novelty!

a rare card table

There is no better time for enjoying a precious work of art than during the siesta.

Satisfied hunger adds serenity to the mind and soul. During the siesta one likes to smoke, to talk and to play. And if one plays on a fine, precious table, one experiences an intense enjoyment. The eye enjoys, the touch enjoys, the mind enjoys. To have under one's eye and hand a warm object, preciously inlaid, is an intimate pleasure of emotional wealth, of refined education of the senses. It is an artistic joy that it is worth while achieving by purchasing a rare card table inlaid in

« BUXUS »

night clubs turn into dreamland

Man, to whatever class he may belong and whatever cultural and spiritual elevation he may possess, has the duty to work, to be faithful to his mission and to his professional and ideological creeds, but, now and then, he has also the right to a parenthesis of rest, of relief and to some nightly enjoyment.

A bottle of Champagne!

A midnight supper!

And this enjoyed in a gay place where the light is not that of the office, where the music is not that of engines and of typewriters, where people are not talking shop, where the walls are not those of one's house or working room! Where walls open an unreal, distant world to one's eyes and imagination, giving a glimpse of a different reality. A reality that will make life seem light, bubbling with joy, gay with amusements, as exciting as a happy and wise cocktail!

You may say: for this purpose, we have theatres and cinemas! Quite

right, but crowds flock to theatres and cinemas, you are a small particle of that black mass of the public, the vision is fleeting, it makes you think and quickly passes away.

On the contrary, a table in a cosy night club corner is reserved for you alone. Opposite, on the walls, there is a colored inlaid fantasy, fixed down and meant for your neglected spirit of observation. You will think you are dreaming. You will really dream; your mind, in a light atmosphere of transparency and perfumed morning smoke will find rest and enjoyment and, during one happy hour, you will completely forget all your troubles. You will say: «those seducing decorations in «BUXUS» have made me dream and delightfully forget!».

the new shop-window

I had the luck of living for some years in New-York. Being interested in artistic publicity, I noticed that, in shop-windows, applied art has great possibilities: products of all kinds glitter in them and a world of splendour is presented in the most astonishing way. I also noticed the particular care taken in setting up shop-windows of all kinds, both huge and small, important and secondary.

I visited several work-shops where windows are studied, planned and prepared. But here, more than in the setting up of shop-windows, we are interested in the renovation of their architecture, in their material and style.

In the past, in order to render shop-windows costly, precious woods were used and inlays were worked with mahogany, maple, rosewood, walnut and the rarest briars. But these are exotic materials and of limited effect.

Now «BUXUS» has made its appearance; it is the new material which was needed for a complete renovation of shop-windows: an economical renovation, yet richer in color and design. A shop-window inlaid in «BUXUS» will be the artistic jewel of modern streets. The chromatic variety of the «BUXUS» offers unthought of effects and the inlaid figurations and symbols will give an unmistakable character to shop-windows, and most refined settings to products. Do not forget that shop-windows are the heart and face of shops.

The window of a hat shop, for instance, will have inlays representing fashionable people and a view of lordly mansions. The window of a wine shop will be inlaid with bunches of grapes and vintage-time motifs. The window of a fashions shop will have inlays reminding one of smart beaches, promenades and other suitable spots, and also original motifs of cloths will catch the eye of passers-by.

These windows will not interfere with their contents; on the contrary, they will integrate them, presenting them with harmonious dignity.

Products, implements and objects will not be exhibited at random, untidily, in discordant order; they will live in their harmonious atmosphere of planes of light and in their own intimate sphere.

the e.n.i.t.

that is the « National Corporation for Italian Touristic Industries » called the artist Fortunato Depero to create a rich series of plastic dioramas in order to make Italian beauty and characteristics known and appreciated abroad.

Beauty and characteristics that go from architecture to the costumes of the people, from textiles to wines, from fruit to flowers, from seas and lakes to Alpine charm: picturesque, suggestive, incomparable attractions.

In order to attain his purpose, the artist chose a new kind of inlay worked with our « BUXUS » thanks to which he could give vent to his fancy by creating plastic panels and masses that were arranged in the halls and windows of the various ENIT offices of Europe. He thus originally succeeded in awakening curiosity and interest in the richness and great value of Italian art and folklore.

In these works, the magnificence of embroidery in the costumes of the various regions is specially suggestive. One should also note the perspective effect of architectural motifs the outstanding lights and shadows, the projection in depth of walls, columns and arches as also the clear vividness of the drawing and the rythm of every motif giving to the work modern splendour, character and style.

We publish in the present catalogue some of these inlaid dioramas in order to show once more the wide field of exploitation offered by BUXUS.

in a smart flat an inlaid door is a rich novelty

In every room there is some space forming a hole. This aesthetic problem is yet to be solved. I am speaking of doors. They may be enamelled in color or made with polished wood or cold metal, they may be of fragile glass or disguised with dusty curtains.... Doors! And why not transform them into decorative works of art? Have we not at our disposal a colored woody material of ideal taste, cleanliness and solidity? A door inlaid in « BUXUS »!

Every time one opens and shuts the precious door, one will have the sensation of opening and shutting a rare casket, the great intimate casket of one's room, of one's world, where one's intimacy is enclosed. Be it the bedroom door or the studio or dining-room door. A door inlaid in BUXUS is a rare adornment!

The day has come in which your architect will no longer say the usual annoying words: « that door is out of tune with the rest ». « But it is a luxury! a caprice! It is artistic opulence! » you will say.

Quite so. It is just this we want: to transform a door into a work of art, to satisfy the taste of luxury and the costly whim of superior people who wish to have complete harmony, total seclusion and perfect, lofty, inspired intimacy in their own room.

Try to imagine it and then tell us if it is not an ideal rarity: in a smart flat, a door inlaid in BUXUS!

the stylistic secret

For many years the painter Depero devoted himself to the stylization of figures, plants, animals and realistic, fantastic and abstract objects and compositions.

He has made a name for himself in his native land, abroad and in America not only with his paintings in galleries and private collections, not only with his decorative and advertising art, but also with his tapestries. Medals, diplomas and the acknowledgment of international criticism have been the reward of the toil and conquests of this exceptional artist.

The special art of his mosaics in stuff led him to the stylization of his own world of perspectives, of invented flora and fauna and of fantastic humanity and he thus achieved a perfect mastery of style. From stuff inlays he passed to BUXUS inlays and he developed with this new material the field of exploitation, achieving character and style that fear no competition and ready to satisfy every request regarding subjects and settings.

We may therefore say, without exaggerating, that here lies his stylistic secret.

a frame suitable to modern pictures does not exist

This is the truth! Speak to any modern painter and you will hear that frames are the things which worry him most in his work. Gilded ones disturb the vivid and fresh painting of our times — frames of natural wood are all right only for black and white engravings and for drawings — also the usual outline and low stucco relief, so called baroque and rococo, are of poor taste. One needs colored frames but soft tones, not showy and not dull or painted, but slightly veined. The frame should appear neither of wood nor of metal, but of an original pictorial material forming a surrounding to the painting and, at the same time, representing a pictorial continuation in tune with the picture. At the same time, it should suit with elegance the modernity of the apartment, of the furniture, of the materials and of the dresses of to-day.

Well, here is a material fulfilling every wish and satisfying artists and all those who love and care for their modern dwelling: this material is called

« B U X U S »



f. deperu

sardinian costumes - (plastic diorama in buxus) property e.n.i.t. rome - 1942



lobster (inlay in buxus · wine shop · Trento 1939)

f. depuro



f. depeto

costumes of the people (plastic diorama in buxus) property c.n.i.f. - rome 1942



sardinian costume (plastic diorama in bauxite) property e.n.i.t. - rome 1942

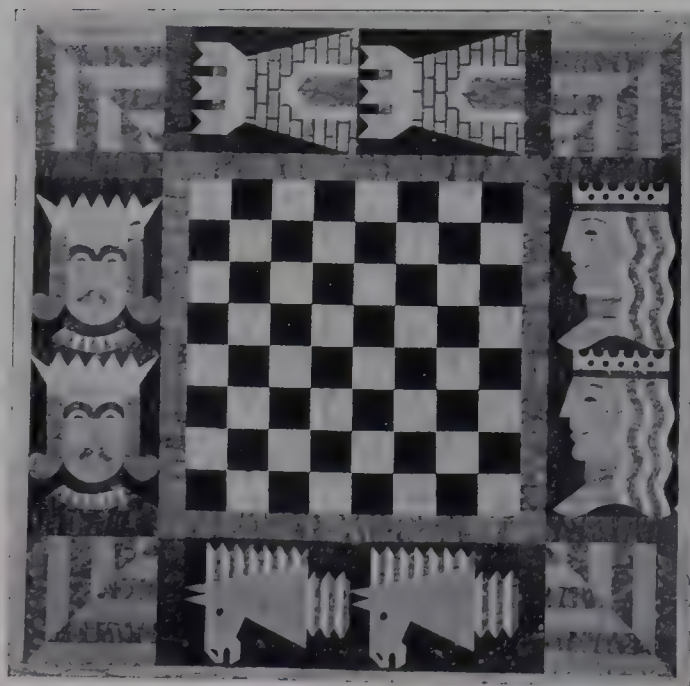
f. deperio



plastic diorama in buxus - property e.n.i.t. - rome 1942



inlaid-works in buxus - f. depero





zebra and penguins - inlaid in buxus



piece of furniture - inlaid in buxus (recompensed at the national artisanlike exhibition of florence 1939

f. depero

biographical notes

Fortunato Depero was born at Fondo (Trentino) on March 30th 1892. A self-taught man, he went to the High School of Rovereto but soon left off studying. After the death of his Mother, he deserts from Austria in 1913 and goes to Rome. There he enters the futuristic movement. Giacomo Balla encourages him and he tends to plastic dynamism with personal character and intentions. In 1915, he fights, as volunteer, on the Col di Lana. In 1916, we have his first general exhibition in Rome. In 1917, he co-operates with Diaghilew for his Russian Ballets. In 1918, he creates the plastic theatre with Gilbert Clavel and then moves to Viareggio. At the end of the first world war, he goes back to he Trentino and sets up a tapestry work-shop which he exhibits, together with his pictorial works, in dozens of shows, both in Italy and abroad, personal and collective. In 1925, he lives in Paris, working and exhibiting. In 1928-29-30 he is in New-York where he sets up seven personal shows and works also for the Roxy Theatre and for the magazine «Vanity Fair». In 1931, he returns to Rovereto. In 1933-34-35, he lives in Milan, always working and exhibiting. From 1936 to the present day, he has lived at Rovereto, devoting himself to tapestries, inlays and mosaics. During the last two years of the war, he evacuated to the mountains and, giving up decorative art of all kinds, he eagerly devoted himself to painting at which he is still working, perfecting his technique, amplifying and strengthening his plastic world — veristic and fantastic, objective and abstract, static and dynamic, physic and metaphysic. Together with his pictorial and plastic work, he has always produced also literary work.

a few opinions

CHRISTIAN BRINTON's OPINION

(Preface to the catalogue of a show by Depero)

french modernism — based upon plastic volume — is static — russian modernism is pure chromatic ecstasy — your contribution — Depero — and that of your italian confreres — is the dynamic note —

form as such does not satisfy you — colour in itself does not interest you — to these elements you add the kinetic principle — the intoxicating delirium of motion — of movement —

everything in your artistic cosmos moves — revolves — you spin the wheel until sparks fly —

futurism — which sprang red hot from the furious impact of modern creative aspiration against age old classic inertia — has produced no more stimulating figure than you — fortunato depero —

just as boccioni was the intrepid initiator of the futurist movement — just as marinetti is its fervid fogleman — prampolini its protean experimentalist — and balla its lyric abstractionist — so you have given it organic dinamism — yet so potent — so explosive is your energy — that it transcends the confines of any specific coterie — you have created a rythmic vibration — an aesthetic wave length — entirely your own —

whilst one with your colleagues — your tempo is faster — your tonality richer — and furthermore — you possess the imperishable spice of humorous fantasy — the true vis comica — in surveying your vivid paintings and tapestries — i hear the throb of mighty machines — i see the swift stab of light — i catch the ironic smile of arlecchino —
 in you — fortunato depero — i salute a new force in contemporary art — you are the epitome of that dynamic modernism which is virile — affirmative — and hence can laugh —

NEW-YORK - 1929

THE NEW-YORK TIMES

Lo, Depero! Lo, Fortunato Depero, «dynamic modernist», disciple of futurism, which, according to its most eloquent sponsor, Boccioni, came into being that it might «abolish quietness and statism»; that it might demonstrate «movement, dynamism». We salute you, «dynamic sensation eternalized as such».

.... Depero is a master who will rear you marvels of men constructed entirely out of pieces of wood connected at the joints with wooden pins. Or, if you choose, he will employ lengths of stovepipe. It matters not. Whatever the material, dynamic movement results. It does. There is much movement, particularly of the phalanx variety, in these strange creations of brush and camera.

.... Depero blazes with color. There are two scales: the scale he uses in paint and the scale called upon when the work is done in bits of colored felt sewed together. The handsome felt pieces in particular are all a-tremble with dynamism and «delirium». They are intoxicating splashes of color and design.

.... Fortunato Depero is a welcome visitor. Fu gran magnificenza!

«The New-York Times» - 1929

DEPERO - ITALIAN MODERNIST

There can be no doubt but that the most emphatic art exhibition of this week is that in the Guarino Galleries by Fortunato Depero.

.... He paints and he makes designs for wall hangings, and the latter are so gay and eye-assaulting that possibly the paintings may be overlooked in the first rush. The hangings are in applique. The designs have been made in flat colors and these colors have been matched in stuffs which have been sewn together so deftly that the needlework is almost untraceable. The subjects are highly modern. One of the principal ones is called «Modern Speeds» and you see depicted all the current modes of locomotion, including, of course, aviation.

It is really skilfully designed and colored. It is, as I said before, an eye-shocker. Dr. Christian Brinton, who sponsors the show, says it emits sparks. It is not a matter of pastel shades, but of the most violent tones of vermillion, emerald green, citron and burnt senna; yet all these wild tints balance each other carefully and lend themselves to a decorative realism.

.... Speed in the abstract seems to have endless attraction for Mr. Depero. In

that, one might almost imagine him an American. In fact, in this case, as in many other instances of European modern art, one half suspects that the artist, when holding up the mirror to the machine age, was in reality focussing his attention upon the wonders of modern America. Being too busy ourselves manufacturing the machines to attend to art, they, the Europeans will do the art for us.

.... Against a simple wall in the type of houses our new architects are building, these pronounced decorations would be immensely in keeping; and it is noised about that, by next year, many of these new houses are destined to appear.

«THE NEW-YORK SUN»

SERGE FRANKI

Depero gave himself up completely to the forces roused by himself in order to possess them and give them the admirable fancy of his manhood. There is in him an indomitable energy swifter than time which creates inexhaustibly: the strength of a young god conceiving a new genesis.

Depero's influence on the new generations of to-day is and will be very great. He offers quite a new world to their longing for enjoyment. May their eyes eager for speed and audacity equal in skill the rare enjoyment given them by their extraordinary teacher!

«Les artistes d'aujourd'hui» - Paris

DEPERO THE DYNAMIC MODERNIST

In 1926, I chanced to see three of Depero's pictures at an Italian modernistic exhibition. All I saw on one of his paintings was a train and a locomotive and I immediately knew that this world was too small for him, that he was capable of creating wonders. This locomotive seemed to come over the mountains, or perhaps out of the skies, over waters and fields and bring with its new lines and designs — a great dynamic expression. A revolutionary bit of work that, and it made an everlasting impression on me. I waited and waited for Depero's exhibition of paintings and it finally came.

At this new exhibition, one can see the artist in the entirety; now he takes the alphabet and constructs a temple with it and now he takes life and builds new life with it, creates new expressions.

.... Depero's composition, the one with the train and the two aeroplanes, was copied and made into a large tapestry. The one showing the three bicycle riders was also copied for a tapestry.

Depero also does not forget the peasant and the ploughshare, the cows in the meadows. Every situation is an idea for him. He uses everything for his art so that we may see and be spiritually uplifted. Depero is the forerunner of a new era, the herald of a new period announcing the new day that must come.

B. EPHRAIM - «The Freiheit» - New-York

ANTON LUIGI ERNE'

Depero's dynamism is, indeed, far from being «absurd» and, if we look carefully at his works, we notice they even possess a rigorous objective conception. He has only a boundless joy in discovering always new unexpected points of view from which he may see and grasp things. It may seem as if his works belonged to the class of those revolutionary artists who sought to «épater le bourgeois». But it is not so. Depero is quite harmless and has no hidden aims; therefore he has no polemic intentions. Here lies his strength and, therefore, his objectivity. In all his works he asks himself only this: «What is my aim?» This is his sole purpose and, in order to achieve it, he makes use of all his fancy and of all his skill. He is, perhaps, the only artist of modern Italy who has fought in every field, always successfully.

«Die Gebrauchsgraphik», - Berlin

CLEMENT MORROT .

Fortunato Depero shows us a different aspect of new artistic Italy, the Italy which revealed futurism. It is a new formula which is often misunderstood, owing, perhaps, to its too obvious simplicity and to the clear cut from the past from which it is derived. Simultaneousness, ubiquity, speed, light, absolute clearness, esthetics of the machine at the utmost degree and, above all, youth and strength: these are the motory nerves of this art.

.... artists like Depero have shown their talent with paintings like «Feast-war», «Radio-fire», «Train at daybreak», «Modern speed» and with plastics in wood like «Hammerers», creating an art which is more full of feeling than one might think at first sight. But Depero is also a decorator, whose colored and lively production lacks neither balance nor modern splendour. He is a renovator who has been misunderstood at first, but whose progress rises daily towards a new beauty and towards a light which, little by little, will dim the shadow of the past.

«Revue Moderne» - Paris

SETTINGS IN MOTION

In a new creative world of stage design, Fortunato Depero finds movement the necessary element in fixing the mood of the Theatre.

Fortunato Depero is one of the leading futurist artists of Europe. He has created dance backgrounds for Diaghilew, Strawinsky, Casella, Malipiero, Casavola and other modern musicians and impresarios. Practically all his paintings are imaginative scenes which can actually be constructed. In them he has created a new world, peopled with strange creatures, amusing animals, startling flora, all novel in form, color, and movement. Yet, despite their striking originality, they have the essence of reality. Depero's contention is that Americans live in a varied,

dynamic world; that speed and action are the essence of our life, and that this motion should be embodied in our theatrical productions. His solution is scenery that moves and complements the action of the dancers. To break the monotony of spangled and feathered dancers, those in baggy trousers or none at all, he suggests using the human form merely as the motive power for animating new objects, taking his inspiration from the factories, machines, engines, locomotives, radios, airplanes which typify our age.

.... Everything he draws, paints or constructs is startlingly bizarre and fantastic, yet it unmistakably belongs to his own personally created world.

«THEATRE MAGAZINE» — N. Y.

«IL FANFULLA» - S. Paolo - Brazil

The circle post-impressionistic of Matisse has not yet closed; it has become a spring-like spiral, from which Depero jumps out through sheer compression force. He is projected in the air like a new young strength that is less refined but, in spite of its burlesque, popular and savage aspects, more disciplined and conscious than Matisse. The latter is too amateurish in his research and too uncertain in regards to his aims; Depero, on the contrary, is more universal for he is nearer to all that is primitive, popular and folkloristic and he is also supported by an absolute conscience. Matisse and Depero identify the same pictorial tendency, bound by the same will: that of condensing impressionism with the aspects of lyric deformation not following accidental reality but only artistic inspiration.

G. S.

GIUSEPPE SPROVIERI

It is certain that everything Depero does stands at the basis of all artistic research. Research moves, as in the paintings of this artist, up the steps of magic stairs on which are chromatic values, thus co-operating to the luminous expansion of the Highest. These are perfect stairs in which the mosaics of constructions find their place according to a law of values ruled by a thorough knowledge of their function.

Thus, from this graphic analysis of Depero's works, we come, through analogies and lyrical amplifications, to the constant rule of his creations: to build up with clearly defined elements an organic and precise work. All that is accidental, approximate and vaguely fantastic is discarded as ballast. And we enter the esthetic formulas of modern artistic conceptions. There where impressionism had placed the instantaneous accidentality of the ray of light as definitive but casual form of the object, where cubism had placed the spreading out of the object seen as intellectual experience, where futurism had placed a shining rocket in its double appearance of lights and dynamism and of the forces which are peculiar to it, Depero places clearness of the parts of the object, according to the new aspects they acquire in the lyrical deformation of the artist's inspiration. Thus everything

is clear: the problems of light (color) and of form (drawing), which had been united and then separated by impressionists, cubists and futurists, recover their unity: the object takes again its salient aspect «sub specis aeternitatis». In other words, to the impressionistic luminous spreading out, changing objective forms, Depero opposes an impressionistic condensation in clearly defined forms, planes, shapes, figures and aspects. The old problem of the Primitives, including the ancient and contemporary problems of Central Africa and the historical Museum and Academy problems of the Italian thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth century, is thus taken in hand again and worked out.

«FANFULLA» - S. Paolo

DINO BONARDI

Depero had his moments of luck and fame in Paris, Berlin and New-York. Of the artist Depero, the work remains. We see it summed up in a volume where we find the rooms dedicated to this artist at the Biennali of Venice and at the Exhibitions of Decorative Art of Milan and Paris. At the beginning of this new epoch of stylistic renewal, Depero really appeared as an inspired, original renovator, able to achieve his aims. The dominant elements of his very large output in various fields of art remain fancy and poetry, even if we look at them to-day. His fancy is evident; his poetry is not only within his multiform work spread all over the world, it is also expressed.... Real poetical pieces explaining the coherence of Depero in life and art and binding in intimate unity the wide and various artistic panorama expressed and dominated by Depero in his long progress of twenty-five years.

«La Sera» - Milano

PAOLO BUZZI

Depero's American impressions are constantly in my mind: I often seek them out on records and their communicative power is always astounding. Depero has really reached something in the field of the architectonic, of the pictorial, of the sculptural and musical, expressed in a wonderful optical-acoustic synthesis. All that is tragic and grotesque, decorative and magic, impressionistic and solidified has attained, in this by now fabulous writer, thanks to instinct and intuition, effects of fancy recreating truth. I heard crowds roar, central stations vibrate, hearts burn and break as fragile cups, in antipodic climates rendered with the brightness of steel and the vibration of antennae.

Milan

VINCENZO COSTANTINI

We must say that Depero possesses a high degree of graphic, rhythmic, and composing talent enabling him to give a designing metric even to dynamic disorder.

In his hands even a ravaging lightning becomes a «composer». And, lastly, in these sharp drawings enlivened by endless restlessness, in these figures well placed in space, we can perceive a first class decorator.

«Ambrosiano» - Milano

FILIPPO DE PISIS

At first sight Depero's art is, above all, decorative, coloristic and suggestive. The purity of colors, which seem to smile at us in a luminous morning atmosphere, attract us together with the precision of clear lines and well defined contour. On second thoughts, however, we notice that a deep mystery is enclosed within Depero's wooden and rigid figures. They have a fatal, almost sorrowful aspect of their own. Their humanity interests us and makes us think of the possible inhabitants of the moon. If we looked at Depero's largest and most complex painting: «Land of tarantellas», spell bound and magnetized as in front of a huge mirror, we would really feel oppressed by the sense of heat and of blinding light contained in the canvas and be delighted by houses, porches and figures inlaid in a sky of pearl; our eyes and our memory would heavily recall the scenes of some Egyptian monuments, terrible, ghostly and suggestive for their wooden and schematic simplicity and for their ineffable rhythm.

Also Depero began with futurism of which we still find traces in his work, for he is still attracted by synthetic perspectives and by clever decompositions of planes and bodies. He also possesses a great technical skill enabling him to obtain coloristic effects which can please even unschooled people and which show his quality of first class painter.

Viareggio

ENZO FERRIERI

Depero has triumphed with his own art, with his own stubborn strength and with his lyric force stirring him and leading him on like a gust of wind. He paints pictures, he writes lyrics, he even uses poems as means of advertisement; he is a real modern man, free of hypocrisy and of false modesty — reckless and noisy — diligent and punctual — with one hand he decorates a wall and with the other he writes a manifest for the reorganization of the Triennale. If he had a third hand, he would prepare a new painting. It is always the same old head — hard, clear and enlightened.... a whole world of new sounds, of smells, of unedited memories. And, among this investigating forces, we find notes of great delicacy, tender and almost moving, the Spring of the water renewing Creation and, above all joy, joy, joy — uncorked from brightly colored wines — springing from the will of working and of living.

«On and on, always rising, always marching, always beginning». This is the challenging motto which Depero should write on his house door and which is engraved in his head crowned with obstinacy and faith.

«Radio-Corriere» - Turin

EUGENIO GIOVANNETTI

A painter, a poet, a man of the theatre, a promoter of decorative industries, a man of vehement programmes, a versatile ideator, Fortunato Depero is a figure of national life deserving more light.

«Giornale d'Italia» - Roma

F. T. MARINETTI

This triumph of Fortunato Depero at New-York is an Italian triumph, for his pictorial, decorative and architectonical genius synthetises all the qualities of our race: from the power of the turreted mountain chains of the Trentino to the fairylike, pure and gay indigo of the Capri sea, from quick Florentine wit to Sardinian heroic hardness, from the mechanical speed of the plain of Lombardy to true and constant Piedmontese patience. Physically, Fortunato Depero has nothing of the traditional artist: rough and quick, with his skull thrust forward as a bullet of will-power, sturdy and resolute. His eyes slightly slanting and drawn back by his ears as if to make him better see and hear at the same time; he gazes at a piece of universe, then grasps it with his teeth, chews it, chisels it according to his taste and then shoots it out on canvas or in a plastic mass. He is exuberant and never satisfied. His brain, like Leonardo's, invents every day new arabesques and new machines. His canvases and drawings erupt a lava of ideas, of novelties, architectures, inhabited clouds, domestic stars and cometary trains on sidereal rails. Depero has often been copied and many plunder him without mentioning his name.

(Criticism published on European and American newspapers)

UGO NEBBIA

Depero has come back to the Camino Gallery to show once more not only all the faith which is always supporting him, but also the means he has at his disposal and which keep him going on a way he has been treading for over thirty years with his typical and exemplary coherence.

His virtues, however, do not only lie in this tenacity and perseverance, but also in the more and more sincere relief of his pleasantly aggressive characteristics of tone, form and invention which he has displayed with bright variety.

«VALORI» Magazine - Milan

RADIUS

Drawings by Depero. Hard is the struggle of those artists who belonged to the futurist group, for, as also is the case of many revolutionaries, people mix them up in their mind with their comrades of a period in which personality had to be sacrificed to the triumph of new ideas. People, indeed, always think more

about a movement than about its personal promoters. In this case, more about futurism than about futurists.

Also Fortunato Depero has undoubtedly been obliged to fight strenuously against this prejudice. What has he done during these last few years? He has travelled, worked and used his rare faculty of being able to decorate in the Italian fashion without falling into the so-called decorative style, leaving, on the contrary, deep marks of individuality. It is possible to decorate even while digging.

Twenty-two choice drawings, reproduced in large size, on fine and not easy paper, bound in a fine volume all the more to be appreciated in these war times of poor editions, document to-day the manly inspired toil of Depero. Pencil, pen and charcoal drawings. Rustic without exaggeration, alpine and «rocky» scenes. These are not impressions, but pondered compositions in which stylistic rigour meets the youthful graphic easiness of the early futurism, and deformation, always full of meaning, tends to express the modern drama of form.

The artist of to-day must find again his figurative faith: this is the meaning of his stubborn research. To understand, to know and then to represent. Contemporary art is nothing but the dock-yard of the art of to-morrow. The necessary implements are carefully prepared. Thus, in these rustic scenes, in these compositions of animals and objects, in these studies of plastic and rhythm everything is solid, everything is already ready for use. There are also pictorial elements studied with that inspired precision with which Morandi characterized Italian engraving. One can understand how the simplest things, depicted in this way in their structural dynamics, rouse and move one more than a complete but inert figurative narration.

«Corriere della Sera» - Milano

LUIGI RUSSOLO

illustrated in a quick synthesis all Depero's work, a work which is the true expression of that continuity of creative effort characterizing Italian artistic tradition, typically revolutionary. Indeed, there is no other instance in foreign artistic schools of such a typical line of milestones, in artistic evolution, characterized by a personal, independent spirit, free from the influence of the past. Russolo proved this thesis by recalling Giotto, Masaccio and Michelangelo, the great revolutionaries of our Renaissance. He then hailed Depero as an artist following the true and glorious Italian tradition.

«Ambrosiano» - Milano

This Depero who, a long time ago — he was then thirty years old — came to my Gallery from his Trentino, shabby and shy, with his portfolio of brightly decorative works and who painted for me, in three or four days, four square metres of a canvas which now is in Moscow, side by side with Van Gogh, Gauguin and Matisse, has ended by lending his talent to the whole world. Here, in my house, together with a few of his paintings, I have drawings of Gontcharova and of Larionov: the forms, colors, deformations, stylizations and

grotesques of these Russians have been taken from Depero. He used to work for Diaghilew's Russian Ballets in front of everybody, carelessly concealing nothing and now he realizes he has been plundered, more or less, by all his visitors: first of all by Bakst, then by Picasso who made use of some of his plastic cardboard and wooden sculptures for «Parade» by Erik Satie, by Larionov and Gontcharova who go as far as changing into a «Théâtre des ombres colorées» what had, been his «Plastic Ballets» performed in Rome with the co-operation of Gilbert Clavel.

«Corriere delle Puglie»

MARIO TINTI

Causing great scandal among the seekers of luminous and atmospheric fluidities, he solidifies shadows, reflections and lights and creates a purposely antilogic and fantastic harmony. In his painting, all is independent from reality and yet almost all is inspired by reality. Depero creates around a nucleus of fantastic inspiration and through the most various and moving elements — of reminiscence, of visions, of observations — an ideal setting in which our imagination wanders as in an enchanted world. Depero has a strong and solid sense of static plasticity. His drawing possesses the abstract purity of figure of classics like Ingres or Puvis de Chavannes. His decorative stylizations of insects are lovingly inspired by nature of which they set in relief the architectural and geometric harmonies.

«Nuovo Giornale» - Firenze

VOLT

If, through his asymmetrical decoration, Depero has offended the laws of public morals, we may have him called before the Public Prosecutor, but I think this is hardly the task of an art critic. And we must also realize that order does not mean symmetry. Trees, clouds, rivers and the waves of the sea are divinely asymmetrical. In man himself, who is the most symmetrical animal of Creation, character, the expression of the face and all that is most interesting is given by small but plain asymmetries. The most ordered human society is full of social distinctions and is, therefore, asymmetrical. Also asymmetrical are those works of men which Sarfatti will not, I hope, call immoral: I mean machines. Why then impose, by all means, symmetry to an artist?

Milan

DEPERO EDITIONS

Depero the futurist - 1927

Publ. by Dinamo Azari - Milan

Single number „Campari 1931“

illustrated

F. T. Marinetti in Trentino 1932

Single number, illustrated

Dynamo futurist

Illustrated magazine edited by Depero - 1932-1933

Umberto Boccioni 1933

Special number, illustrated

Radio lyrics

Publ. by G. Morreale - Milan 1934

96 decorative color plates

Edition 1938

Depero in his life and works

Publ. by Trento - 1940

Collection of 22 drawings

size cm. 56 × 43 - Publ. 1944

„So I think so I paint“

Ideologies of an Italian self-made painter

Milan - New-York - 1948



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